

PCT

NOTIFICATION OF ELECTION

(PCT Rule 61.2)

From the INTERNATIONAL BUREAU

To:

Commissioner
US Department of Commerce
United States Patent and Trademark
Office, PCT
2011 South Clark Place Room
CP2/5C24
Arlington, VA 22202
ETATS-UNIS D'AMERIQUE
in its capacity as elected Office

Date of mailing (day/month/year) 22 May 2001 (22.05.01)	International application No. PCT/GB00/03156	Applicant's or agent's file reference PDR/X088469PWO
International filing date (day/month/year) 17 August 2000 (17.08.00)	Priority date (day/month/year) 21 August 1999 (21.08.99)	
Applicant FERGUSON, Keith, Lamont		

1. The designated Office is hereby notified of its election made:

☒ in the demand filed with the International Preliminary Examining Authority on:
19 March 2001 (19.03.01)

☐ in a notice effecting later election filed with the International Bureau on:

2. The election ☒ was
☐ was not

made before the expiration of 19 months from the priority date or, where Rule 32 applies, within the time limit under Rule 32.2(b).

The International Bureau of WIPO 34, chemin des Colombettes 1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland Facsimile No.: (41-22) 740.14.35 Form PCT/IB/331 (July 1992)	Authorized officer Juan Cruz Telephone No.: (41-22) 338.83.38
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1 March 2001 (01.03.2001)

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- (21) International Application Number: **PCT/GB00/03156**
- (22) International Filing Date: **17 August 2000 (17.08.2000)**
- (25) Filing Language: **English**
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- (30) Priority Data:
9919805.3 **21 August 1999 (21.08.1999)** **GB**
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- (81) Designated States (*national*): **AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ, DE, DK, DM, DZ, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZW.**
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- Published:**
— *Without international search report and to be republished upon receipt of that report.*
- For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.*



WO 01/15457 A2

(54) Title: **IMAGE CODING**

(57) Abstract: An image coding method comprising generating an ordered sequence of coded image data, the sequence beginning with coded data representative of an area of the image having high importance, and ending with coded data representative of an area of the image having lower importance.

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9919805.3 21 August 1999 (21.08.1999) GB(71) Applicant (for all designated States except US): THE
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Mosley Street, Manchester M2 3LG (GB).(81) Designated States (national): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT, AU,
AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CR, CU, CZ,
DE, DK, DM, DZ, EE, ES, FI, GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR,
HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR,
LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ,
NO, NZ, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK, SL, TJ, TM,
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patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE,
IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE), OAPI patent (BF, BJ, CF, CG,
CI, CM, GA, GN, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

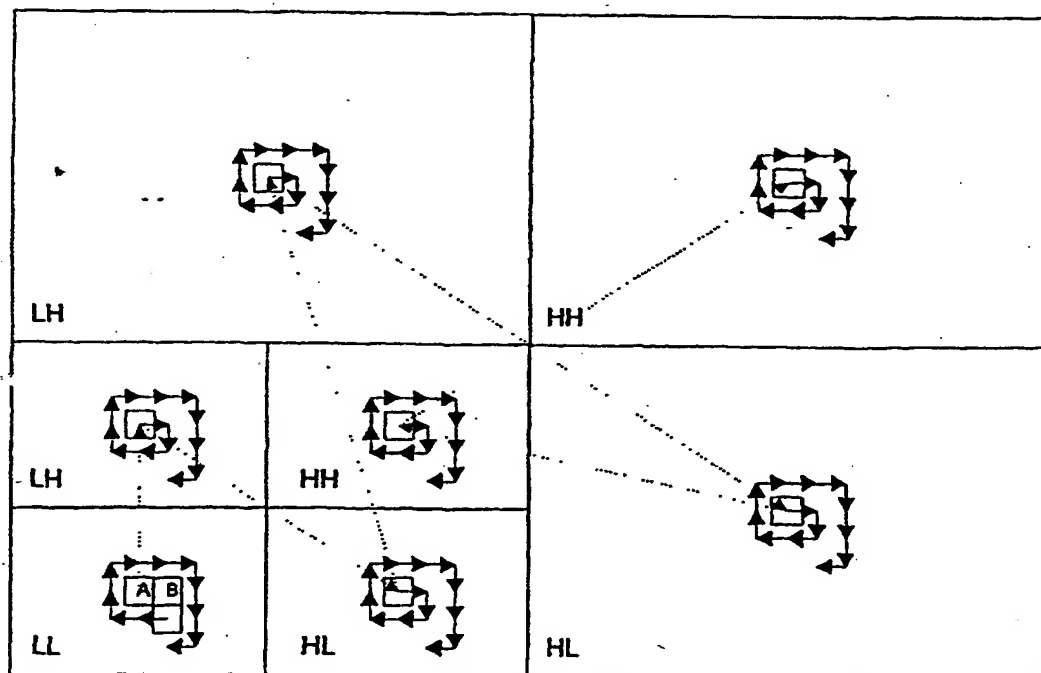
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10 May 2001

[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: IMAGE CODING



(57) Abstract: An image coding method comprising generating an ordered sequence of coded image data, the sequence beginning with coded data representative of an area of the image having high importance, and ending with coded data representative of an area of the image having lower importance.



WO 01/15457 A3



For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 7 H04N7/26 H04N7/28

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 H04N

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, INSPEC, COMPENDEX

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	WO 98 54903 A (AONO TOMOKO ;KUSAO HIROSHI (JP); SAIGA HISASHI (JP); KATATA HIROYU) 3 December 1998 (1998-12-03) page 33, line 5 - line 16 page 49, line 14 -page 51, line 18 page 53, line 14 - line 18	1-11,16, 28
Y	figures 7,12,15	12,13, 15,17, 18,26,27 14
A	---	
Y	US 5 063 444 A (SAFRANEK ROBERT J ET AL) 5 November 1991 (1991-11-05)	12,13,26
A	abstract	1,19-25, 27,28

	-/-	

☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

A document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance

E earlier document but published on or after the international filing date

L document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)

O document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means

P document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

T later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention

X document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone

Y document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.

Z document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

6 February 2001

Date of mailing of the international search report

13/02/2001

Name and mailing address of the ISA

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Authorized officer

Berbain, F

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/GB 00/03156

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	MANDAL M KR ET AL: "MULTIRESOLUTION MOTION ESTIMATION TECHNIQUES FOR VIDEO COMPRESSION" OPTICAL ENGINEERING,US,SOC. OF PHOTO-OPTICAL INSTRUMENTATION ENGINEERS. BELLINGHAM, vol. 35, no. 1, 1996, pages 128-135, XP000631420 ISSN: 0091-3286 cited in the application	15,17, 18,27
A	paragraph '03.1!	1,26
A	US 5 594 503 A (MIYAZAWA TAKEO) 14 January 1997 (1997-01-14) abstract	1,19-25

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
WO 9854903 A	03-12-1998	JP 11046372 A EP 1016284 A	16-02-1999 05-07-2000
US 5063444 A	05-11-1991	CA 2037755 A JP 4222186 A	20-09-1991 12-08-1992
US 5594503 A	14-01-1997	JP 7177502 A	14-07-1995

DECLARATION AND POWER OF ATTORNEY FOR PATENT APPLICATION

Attorney Dock number

7445-2

First Named Inventor

Keith Lamont Ferguson

☐ Declaration submitted with Initial Filing

☐ Declaration Submitted after Initial Filing (surcharge (37 CFR 1.16(e)) required)

COMPLETE IF KNOWN

Application No.

Filing Date

Group Art Unit

Examiner's Name

As a below named inventor, I hereby declare that:

My residence, post office address and citizenship are as stated below next to my name.

I believe I am the original, first and sole inventor (if only one name is listed below) or an original, first and joint inventor (if plural names are listed below) of the subject matter which is claimed and for which a patent is sought on the invention entitled

IMAGE CODING

the specification of which
(check one)

☐ is attached hereto.

☒ Was filed on August 17, 2000 as United States Application No. or

PCT International Application No. PCT/GB00/03156

☐ And was amended on _____ (if applicable).

I hereby state that I have reviewed and understand the contents of the above-identified specification, including the claims, as amended by any amendment referred to above.

I acknowledge the duty to disclose information which is material to the patentability of this application in accordance with Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56.

I hereby claim foreign priority benefits under Title 35, United States Code, §119(a)-(d) or 365(b) of any foreign application(s) for patent or inventor's certificate, or 365(a) of any PCT international application which designated at least one country other than the United States of America, listed below and have also identified below, by checking the box, any foreign application for patent or inventor's certificate having a filing date before that of the application on which priority is claimed:

Prior Foreign Application Number(s)	Country	Foreign Filing Date (MM/DD/YY)	Priority Not Claimed	Certified Copy Attached?	
				Yes	No
PCT/GB00/03156	PCT	08/17/2000		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
GB 9019600.6	GB	03/31/1999		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

I hereby claim the benefit under 35 U.S.C. 119(e) of any United States provisional application(s) listed below.

Application Number(s)	Filing Date (MM/DD/YYYY)

☐ Additional provisional application numbers are listed on a supplemental priority data sheet PTO/SB/02B attached hereto.

below and, insofar as the subject matter of each of the claims of this application is not disclosed in the prior United States application in the manner provided by the first paragraph of Title 35, United States Code, §112, I acknowledge the duty to disclose material information as defined in Title 37, Code of Federal Regulations, §1.56 which occurred between the filing date of the prior application and the national or PCT international filing date of this application:

U.S. Parent Application or PCT Parent Number	Parent Filing Date (MM/DD/YYYY)	Parent Patent Number

☐ Additional US or PCT International application numbers are listed on a supplement priority data sheet PTO/SB/02B attached hereto.

As a named inventor, I hereby appoint the following registered practitioner(s) to prosecute this application and transact all business in the Patent and Trademark Office connected therewith:

☐

Customer Number



OR

Place Customer Number Bar Code Label Here

☒

Registered practitioner(s) name/registration number listed below.

Name	Registration Number	Name	Registration Number
Thomas Q. Henry	28,309		

☒ Additional registered practitioner(s) named on supplemental Registered Practitioner Information sheet PTO/SB/02C attached hereto.

Direct all correspondence to :

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Customer Number Bar Code Label

OR

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Correspondence address below

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Address					
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Country	USA	Telephone	317/ 634-3456	Fax	317-637-7561

I hereby declare that all statements made herein of my own knowledge are true and that all statements made on information and belief are believed to be true; and further that these statements were made with the knowledge that willful false statements and the like so made are punishable by fine or imprisonment, or both, under Section 1001 of Title 18 of the United States Code and that such willful false statements may jeopardize the validity of the application or any patent issued thereon.

Full name of sole or first inventor:

Given Name (first and middle, if any)	Keith Lamont	Family Name or Surname	Ferguson
Inventor's Signature:		Date of Signature:	
Residence: (City, State, Country)	Manchester M60 1QD, United Kingdom		
Citizenship:	GB		
Post Office Address:	P. O. Box 88 Manchester M60 1QD, United Kingdom		

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(Supplemental Sheet)**

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John V. Moriarty	26,207		
John C. McNett	25,533		
Thomas Q. Henry	28,309		
James M. Durlacher	28,840		
Charles R. Reeves	28,750		
Vincent O. Wagner	29,596		
Steve Zlatos	30,123		
Spiro Bereveskos	30,821		
Clifford W. Browning	32,201		
R. Randall Frisk	32,221		
Daniel J. Lueders	32,581		
Kenneth A. Gandy	33,386		
Timothy N. Thomas	35,714		
Kurt N. Jones	37,237		
John H. Allie	39,088		
Holiday W. Banta	40,311		
Troy J. Cole	35,102		
L. Scott Paynter	39,797		
Charles J. Meyer	41,996		
Matthew R. Schantz	40,800		
Gregory B. Coy	40,967		
Lisa A. Hiday	40,036		
John V. Daniluck	40,581		
Christopher A. Brown	41,642		
C. John Brannon	44,557		
Arthur J. Usher IV	41,359		
Douglas A. Collier	43,556		
Brad A. Schepers	45,431		
Scott J. Stevens	29,446		
James B. Myers	42,021		
John M. Bradshaw	46,573		
Charles P. Schmal	45,082		
Edward E. Sowers	36,015		

INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

(PCT Article 36 and Rule 70)

Applicant's or agent's file reference PDR/MB/X088469PWO	FOR FURTHER ACTION See Notification of Transmittal of International Preliminary Examination Report (Form PCT/PEA/416)	
International application No. PCT/GB00/03156	International filing date (day/month/year) 17/08/2000	Priority date (day/month/year) 21/08/1999
International Patent Classification (IPC) or national classification and IPC H04N7/26		
Applicant THE UNIV. OF MANCHESTER INSTIT. OF.....et al.		



1. This international preliminary examination report has been prepared by this International Preliminary Examining Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 36.
2. This REPORT consists of a total of 4 sheets, including this cover sheet.

☒ This report is also accompanied by ANNEXES, i.e. sheets of the description, claims and/or drawings which have been amended and are the basis for this report and/or sheets containing rectifications made before this Authority (see Rule 70.16 and Section 607 of the Administrative Instructions under the PCT).

These annexes consist of a total of 6 sheets.

3. This report contains indications relating to the following items:

- I ☒ Basis of the report
- II ☐ Priority
- III ☒ Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability
- IV ☐ Lack of unity of invention
- V ☐ Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement
- VI ☐ Certain documents cited
- VII ☐ Certain defects in the international application
- VIII ☐ Certain observations on the international application

Date of submission of the demand 19/03/2001	Date of completion of this report 06.12.2001
Name and mailing address of the international preliminary examining authority:  European Patent Office D-80298 Munich Tel. +49 89 2399 - 0 Tx: 523656 epmu d Fax: +49 89 2399 - 4465	Authorized officer Schneiderlin, J Telephone No. +49 89 2399 7400 

INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

International application No. PCT/GB00/03156

I. Basis of the report

1. With regard to the **elements** of the international application (*Replacement sheets which have been furnished to the receiving Office in response to an invitation under Article 14 are referred to in this report as "originally filed" and are not annexed to this report since they do not contain amendments (Rules 70.16 and 70.17)*):

Description, pages:

1-3,5-34	as originally filed		
4,4a	as received on	14/11/2001 with letter of	06/11/2001

Claims, No.:

1-25	as received on	14/11/2001 with letter of	06/11/2001
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Drawings, sheets:

1/12-12/12	as received on	13/10/2000
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- 2. With regard to the **language**, all the elements marked above were available or furnished to this Authority in the language in which the international application was filed, unless otherwise indicated under this item.

These elements were available or furnished to this Authority in the following language: , which is:

- ☐ the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of the international search (under Rule 23.1(b)).
- ☐ the language of publication of the international application (under Rule 48.3(b)).
- ☐ the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of international preliminary examination (under Rule 55.2 and/or 55.3).

3. With regard to any **nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence** disclosed in the international application, the international preliminary examination was carried out on the basis of the sequence listing:

- ☐ contained in the international application in written form.
- ☐ filed together with the international application in computer readable form.
- ☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in written form.
- ☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in computer readable form.
- ☐ The statement that the subsequently furnished written sequence listing does not go beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed has been furnished.
- ☐ The statement that the information recorded in computer readable form is identical to the written sequence listing has been furnished.

4. The amendments have resulted in the cancellation of:

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT**

International application No. PCT/GB00/03156

- ☐ the description, pages:
☐ the claims, Nos.:
☐ the drawings, sheets:

5. ☐ This report has been established as if (some of) the amendments had not been made, since they have been considered to go beyond the disclosure as filed (Rule 70.2(c)):

(Any replacement sheet containing such amendments must be referred to under item 1 and annexed to this report.)

6. Additional observations, if necessary:

III. Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability

1. The questions whether the claimed invention appears to be novel, to involve an inventive step (to be non-obvious), or to be industrially applicable have not been examined in respect of:

- ☐ the entire international application.
☒ claims Nos. 1,25.

because:

- ☐ the said international application, or the said claims Nos. relate to the following subject matter which does not require an international preliminary examination (*specify*):
- ☒ the description, claims or drawings (*indicate particular elements below*) or said claims Nos. 1,25 are so unclear that no meaningful opinion could be formed (*specify*):
see separate sheet
- ☒ the claims, or said claims Nos. 1,25 are so inadequately supported by the description that no meaningful opinion could be formed.
- ☐ no international search report has been established for the said claims Nos. .

2. A meaningful international preliminary examination cannot be carried out due to the failure of the nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence listing to comply with the standard provided for in Annex C of the Administrative Instructions:

- ☐ the written form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.
☐ the computer readable form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT - SEPARATE SHEET**

International application No. PCT/GB00/03156

Re Item III

No basis was found for "on adding the image to the reference image, setting the higher resolution data to zero" in the encoder (claim 1 and claim 25). This feature is even in contradiction with the description. Claims 1-25 are therefore not supported by the description as required by Article 6 PCT. Furthermore this amendment introduces subject-matter which extends beyond the content of the application as filed, contrary to Article 34(2)(b) PCT.

On the paragraph bridging pages 14 and 15 of the description, it is explained that the decoder will set to zero the higher resolution data that are not coded for a current image and which were coded in the reference image. This is needed to ensure the visual quality of the decoded picture in case of shortage of bandwidth because the reference image used by the decoder is not the same as the reference image used by the encoder as a skilled person would understand by reading the description page 8 to 14 (the decoder will have a lower resolution reference image).

No clear indication could be found in the description that the encoder includes a mechanism to set the higher resolution data of the reference image in the coding loop to zero.

The applicant tries to define a coding method with actions that are performed in a decoder.

REPLACES
PAT 34 AM

Error concealment strategies used by video coding methods based upon the H.263 algorithm are spatial and therefore show up as corrupted regions in reconstructed image frames.

It is an object of the present invention to provide an image coding method which overcomes at least one of the above disadvantages.

According to the invention there is provided an image coding method comprising generating an ordered sequence of coded image data, the sequence beginning with coded data representative of an area of the image having high importance, and ending with coded data representative of an area of the image having lower importance.

Preferably, the importance of the image areas represented by the coded data decreases gradually over the ordered sequence.

Preferably, the image data coding sequence is arranged in a substantially spiral configuration centred on the area of importance.

Preferably, the area of importance is at a location selected as the most likely centre point of foveated vision of a viewer of the image.

Preferably, the area of importance is at a centre point of the image.

Preferably, the method includes converting an image into a multi-resolution representation, different resolution representations of the image being coded in sequence, the order of the sequence being determined to reflect psychophysical aspects of human vision.

Preferably, according to the sequence a luminance representation of the image is coded before chrominance representations of the image.

Preferably, for a given level of resolution, the luminance representation is arranged to include more resolution than the chrominance representations.

Claims

1. An image coding method comprising generating an ordered sequence of coded image data, the sequence beginning with coded data representative of an area of the image having high importance, and ending with coded data representative of an area of the image having lower importance.
2. An image coding method according to claim 1, wherein the importance of the image areas represented by the coded data decreases gradually over the ordered sequence.
3. An image coding method according to claim 2, wherein the image data coding sequence is arranged in a substantially spiral configuration centred on the area of importance.
4. An image coding method according to any preceding claim, wherein the area of importance is at a location selected as the most likely centre point of foveated vision of a viewer of the image.
5. An image coding method according to claim 4, wherein the area of importance is at a centre point of the image.
6. An image coding method according to any preceding claim, wherein the method includes converting an image into a multi-resolution representation, different resolution representations of the image being coded in sequence, the order of the sequence being determined to reflect psychophysical aspects of human vision.
7. An image coding method according to claim 6, wherein according to the sequence a luminance representation of the image is coded before chrominance representations of the image.
8. An image coding method according to claim 7, wherein for a given level of resolution, the luminance representation is arranged to include more resolution than the chrominance representations.

9. An image coding method according to any of claims 6 to 8, wherein the multi-resolution representation is generated using a wavelet transform, and the coding sequence comprises wavelet representation of the image which increase from a low level of resolution to a high level of resolution.
10. An image coding method according to claim 9, wherein wavelet orientations of horizontal and vertical image components are coded before wavelet orientations of diagonal image components.
11. An image coding method according to claim 10, wherein wavelet orientations of diagonal image components of a given level of resolution are coded after wavelet orientations of horizontal and vertical image components of a higher resolution.
12. An image coding method according to any preceding claim, wherein the method is implemented as part of a communications system, and the amount of coded information output by the method for a given image is determined on an image by image basis in accordance with the available bandwidth of the communications system.
13. An image coding method according to claim 12, wherein where necessary in order to fully utilise the available bandwidth of the communications system includes a truncated sequence of coded image data, image data representative of areas of least importance having been excluded from the truncated sequence.
14. An image coding method according to any preceding claim, wherein a predetermined code is added to a sequence to indicate the end of image data representative of a particular aspect of the image.
15. An image coding method according to any preceding claim, wherein the image is one of a sequence of images, the image is compared to a reference image determined using preceding images of the sequence, and the coding method is used to code differences between the image and the reference image.

16. An image coding method according to any preceding claim, wherein scalar quantisation is used to minimise the amount of image data to be coded, the scalar quantisation being based upon a psychophysical model.
17. An image coding method according to any preceding claim, wherein the method includes an estimation of motion within an image as compared with a reference image, and the estimated motion is included in the coded image data.
18. An image coding method according to claim 17, wherein the method includes a choice between image data that has been coded using motion estimation and data that has been coded without using motion estimation, the choice being made upon the basis of minimising distortion of the coded image.
19. An image coding method according to any preceding claim, wherein the method includes vector quantisation of the image, the vector quantisation being implemented using a self organising neural map to provide image data in the form of indices of a codebook.
20. An image coding method according to claim 9 and claim 19, wherein a threshold is applied to the magnitude of wavelet coefficients, and those which fall below the threshold are converted to zero coefficients.
21. An image coding method according to claim 9 and claim 19, wherein different codebooks are used for different sub-bands of the wavelet representation of the image.
22. An image coding method according to any of claims 19 to 21, wherein the indices of the codebook are subsequently coded using variable length entropy coding.
23. An image coding method according to claim 22, wherein a series of zero indices followed by a non-zero index is coded as a pair of values by the variable length entropy coding, a first value representing the number of zero indices in the series and the second value representing the value of the non-zero index.

24. An image coding method according to claim 22 or claim 23, wherein a threshold is applied to the indices of the codebook, and those indices which fall below the threshold are converted to zero indices.
25. An image coding method according to claim 24, wherein wavelet coefficients which fall above the threshold are reduced by the value of the threshold.
26. A method of decoding an image coded in accordance with any preceding claim, wherein where a truncated sequence of coded image data is received, the decoder decodes the image using the truncated sequence of coded image data and uses zero values in place of missing coded image data.
27. A method of decoding an image according to claim 26, wherein the coded image is a difference image which is added to a reference image to generate a decoded image, and artefacts at higher resolutions of the decoded image caused by the truncated sequence are removed by setting the higher resolution data to zero.
28. An image coding method substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying figures.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TREATY

PCT

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

(PCT Article 18 and Rules 43 and 44)

Applicant's or agent's file reference PDR/X088469PW0	FOR FURTHER ACTION see Notification of Transmittal of International Search Report (Form PCT/ISA/220) as well as, where applicable, item 5 below.	
International application No. PCT/GB 00/ 03156	International filing date (day/month/year) 17/08/2000	(Earliest) Priority Date (day/month/year) 21/08/1999
Applicant THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER INSTITUTE OF SCIENCE;		

This International Search Report has been prepared by this International Searching Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 18. A copy is being transmitted to the International Bureau.

This International Search Report consists of a total of 3 sheets.

☒ It is also accompanied by a copy of each prior art document cited in this report.

1. Basis of the report

- a. With regard to the **language**, the international search was carried out on the basis of the international application in the language in which it was filed, unless otherwise indicated under this item.

☐ the international search was carried out on the basis of a translation of the international application furnished to this Authority (Rule 23.1(b)).

- b. With regard to any **nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence** disclosed in the international application, the international search was carried out on the basis of the sequence listing :

☐ contained in the international application in written form.

☐ filed together with the international application in computer readable form.

☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in written form.

☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in computer readable form.

☐ the statement that the subsequently furnished written sequence listing does not go beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed has been furnished.

☐ the statement that the information recorded in computer readable form is identical to the written sequence listing has been furnished

2. ☐ **Certain claims were found unsearchable** (See Box I).

3. ☐ **Unity of invention is lacking** (see Box II).

4. With regard to the **title**,

☒ the text is approved as submitted by the applicant.

☐ the text has been established by this Authority to read as follows:

5. With regard to the **abstract**,

☒ the text is approved as submitted by the applicant.

☐ the text has been established, according to Rule 38.2(b), by this Authority as it appears in Box III. The applicant may, within one month from the date of mailing of this international search report, submit comments to this Authority.

6. The figure of the **drawings** to be published with the abstract is Figure No.

☐ as suggested by the applicant.

☒ because the applicant failed to suggest a figure.

☐ because this figure better characterizes the invention.

2

☐ None of the figures.

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 7 H04N7/26 H04N7/28

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
IPC 7 H04N

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, INSPEC, COMPENDEX

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	WO 98 54903 A (AONO TOMOKO ;KUSAO HIROSHI (JP); SAIGA HISASHI (JP); KATATA HIROYU) 3 December 1998 (1998-12-03) page 33, line 5 - line 16 page 49, line 14 -page 51; line 18 page 53, line 14 - line 18	1-11,16, 28
Y	figures 7,12,15	12,13, 15,17, 18,26,27 14
A		
Y	US 5 063 444 A (SAFRANEK ROBERT J ET AL) 5 November 1991 (1991-11-05) abstract	12,13,26
A		1,19-25, 27,28
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☒ Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.

☒ Patent family members are listed in annex.

* Special categories of cited documents :

- *A* document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
- *E* earlier document but published on or after the international filing date
- *L* document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)
- *O* document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
- *P* document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

- *T* later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
- *X* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
- *Y* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.
- * & * document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

6 February 2001

Date of mailing of the international search report

13/02/2001

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C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	MANDAL M KR ET AL: "MULTIRESOLUTION MOTION ESTIMATION TECHNIQUES FOR VIDEO COMPRESSION" OPTICAL ENGINEERING, US, SOC. OF PHOTO-OPTICAL INSTRUMENTATION ENGINEERS. BELLINGHAM, vol. 35, no. 1, 1996, pages 128-135, XP000631420 ISSN: 0091-3286 cited in the application	15, 17, 18, 27
A	paragraph '03.1! ---	1, 26
A	US 5 594 503 A (MIYAZAWA TAKEO) 14 January 1997 (1997-01-14) abstract -----	1, 19-25

Patent document cited in search report		Publication date	Patent family member(s)		Publication date
WO 9854903	A	03-12-1998	JP	11046372 A	16-02-1999
			EP	1016284 A	05-07-2000
US 5063444	A	05-11-1991	CA	2037756 A	20-09-1991
			JP	4222186 A	12-08-1992
US 5594503	A	14-01-1997	JP	7177502 A	14-07-1995

WO 01/15457

1

Image Coding

The present invention relates to a method of image coding. The method may be applied to, but is not limited to, coding of a series of video frames (where the term video refers to temporally separated images).

A primary problem addressed by video coding is how to reduce the number of bits needed to represent video frames. This problem arises in communications applications as a result of bandwidth restriction of communications systems, and arises in storage applications from limited storage capacity of storage media. A quarter common interchange format (QCIF - 176 x 144 pixels) colour video stream comprises 25 frames per second (25fps), each pixel of the frame being represented by 8 bits (8bpp). Transmission of a QCIF colour video stream would require a communications bandwidth of $\approx 14.5\text{M}$ bits/s. A 1 hour recording of a QCIF colour video stream would require $\approx 6.4\text{G}$ Bytes of storage. There are many applications in which the available bandwidth or available storage capacity is orders of magnitude less than these values.

The development of a video coding method capable of coding video frames using small amounts of data is of considerable commercial importance. In particular, there is a demand for a video coding method capable of coding video frames for transmission by a low-bandwidth communication channel. Low bandwidth is defined here as a bandwidth of 64kbits/s or less (this corresponds to an ISDN basic rate channel). Other low bandwidths for which video coding methods are required include 28.8k bits/s, which is typically utilised by computer modems, and 9600k bits/s or less which is used for mobile telephony applications. A video coding method must compress video frames to an extreme degree in order to transmit the video frames over a low bandwidth communications channel. For example, for a 64k bits/s channel the QCIF colour video stream requires an average compression ratio of 232:1, a 28.8k bits/s channel requires 528:1 and a 10k bits/s channel, 1485:1.

Video frames contain a great deal of redundancy, particularly in the form of an unchanging background. Redundancy of this type is known as objective

information redundancy. Existing video coding methods take advantage of objective information redundancy to reduce the number of bits needed to represent video frames. An ideal video coding method should convert video frames to a representation in which a minimal amount of information may be used to exactly reconstruct the video frames, with any objective information redundancy being removed from the representation.

Where a low-bandwidth communication channel is to be used (i.e. 64kbits/s or less), or a low capacity storage medium is to be used, information other than objectively redundant information is removed from representations of video frames. This will inevitably lead to degradation of the reconstructed image frames; there is an unavoidable trade-off between distortion and bit rate. The problem addressed by low bit-rate video coding methods is how to minimise distortion, and where there is distortion make that distortion as acceptable as possible.

Popular video compression methods are derivatives of one another including MPEG-1, MPEG-2, H.261, H.263 [H.261: 'ITU-T Recommendation H.261, video codec for audiovisual services at p x 64 kbit/s', Geneva, 1990; H.263: 'ITU-T Recommendation H.263, video coding for low bit rate communication', February 1998; MPEG-1: 'Coding of moving pictures and associated audio for digital storage media at up to about 1.5 Mbit/s', ISO/IEC 11172-2 Video, November 1991; MPEG-2: 'Generic coding of moving pictures and associated audio information', ISO/IEC 13818-2 Video, Draft International Standard, November 1994]. These methods operate in the spatial domain, and include motion compensation and a first-order coding loop (i.e. differences between successive images are coded). Discrete cosine transforms (DCT) of difference images are uniformly quantised and then entropy coded. The resulting bit stream is of variable length. Where a communications channel operates at a constant bit rate (as is conventional), a buffer is used to decouple the bit stream from the communications channel. The average bit rate from the algorithm is maintained at the channel bit rate by regulating the scalar quantisation of the difference image DCT coefficients, coarser quantisation providing higher distortion but lower bit rates. The number of bits generated cannot be accurately predicted, and this is why a buffer is needed to maintain an average bit rate. Where a drastic correction of the bit rate is

WO 01/15457

3

PCT/GB00/03156

required, the frame rate is instantaneously decreased. The channel buffer introduces a delay which becomes significant at very low bit-rates on narrow bandwidth channels.

Existing very low bit rate (VLBR) video coding methods are currently formulated around extensions of the H.263 algorithm that also forms the basis for the MPEG-4 type algorithms. [H.263: 'ITU-T Recommendation H.263, video coding for low bit rate communication', February 1998; MPEG-4: 'MPEG-4 video verification model version-11', ISO/IEC JTC1/SC29/WG11, N2171, Tokyo, March 1998]. The H.263 coding algorithm is designed to operate over fixed copper land lines with a 28.8kbits/s modem. These channels are assumed to be error free and are assumed to have a constant bandwidth.

With the growth of the Internet and mobile telephone markets there is a demand to deliver 'live' video content over channels that have significantly different channel characteristics compared to fixed copper land lines. The Internet has a very wide effective bandwidth dynamic range from a few hundred bytes/s to several kilo bytes/s. This bandwidth may change instantaneously. Third generation (3G) mobile telephones operate with a broadband Code Division Multiplex Access (CDMA) system which has a bandwidth that may change instantaneously. Typically, changes of effective bandwidth are caused by increased congestion or increased bit error rates.

Existing video coding methods developed for the Internet and mobile telephone systems comprise adaptations of the H.263 algorithm. These methods suffer from the disadvantage that they require a channel buffer, and therefore include a delay which affects 'live' transmission of video and in particular live two-way communication. The buffer also affects the ability of the methods to respond to instantaneously changing channel bandwidths. A further disadvantage of video coding methods based upon the H.263 algorithm is that they cannot deliver information at a continuously variable bit rate, but instead jump between different bit rates in coarse steps, typically by varying the number of frames per second. Where there are many differences between images, for example if a fast moving object crosses the image, then the frame rate may drop, and the object may not be seen. If the frame rate drops too low, the image is lost.

Error concealment strategies used by video coding methods based upon the H.263 algorithm are spatial and therefore show up as corrupted regions in reconstructed image frames.

It is an object of the present invention to provide an image coding method which overcomes at least one of the above disadvantages.

According to the invention there is provided an image coding method comprising generating an ordered sequence of coded image data, the sequence beginning with coded data representative of an area of the image having high importance, and ending with coded data representative of an area of the image having lower importance.

Preferably, the importance of the image areas represented by the coded data decreases gradually over the ordered sequence.

Preferably, the image data coding sequence is arranged in a substantially spiral configuration centred on the area of importance.

Preferably, the area of importance is at a location selected as the most likely centre point of foveated vision of a viewer of the image.

Preferably, the area of importance is at a centre point of the image.

Preferably, the method includes converting an image into a multi-resolution representation, different resolution representations of the image being coded in sequence, the order of the sequence being determined to reflect psychophysical aspects of human vision.

Preferably, according to the sequence a luminance representation of the image is coded before chrominance representations of the image.

Preferably, for a given level of resolution, the luminance representation is arranged to include more resolution than the chrominance representations.

WO 01/15457

5

PCT/GB00/03156

Preferably, the multi-resolution representation is generated using a wavelet transform, and the coding sequence comprises wavelet representation of the image which increase from a low level of resolution to a high level of resolution.

Preferably, wavelet orientations of horizontal and vertical image components are coded before wavelet orientations of diagonal image components.

Preferably, wavelet orientations of diagonal image components of a given level of resolution are coded after wavelet orientations of horizontal and vertical image components of a higher resolution.

Preferably, the method is implemented as part of a communications system, and the amount of coded information output by the method for a given image is determined on an image by image basis in accordance with the available bandwidth of the communications system.

Preferably, where necessary in order to fully utilise the available bandwidth of the communications system includes a truncated sequence of coded image data, image data representative of areas of least importance having been excluded from the truncated sequence.

Preferably, a predetermined code is added to a sequence to indicate the end of image data representative of a particular aspect of the image.

Preferably, the image is one of a sequence of images, the image is compared to a reference image determined using preceding images of the sequence, and the coding method is used to code differences between the image and the reference image.

Preferably, scalar quantisation is used to minimise the amount of image data to be coded, the scalar quantisation being based upon a psychophysical model.

Preferably, the method includes an estimation of motion, which is compared with a reference image, and the estimated motion is included in the coded image data.

Preferably, the method includes a choice between image data that has been coded using motion estimation and data that has been coded without using motion estimation, the choice being made upon the basis of minimising distortion of the coded image.

Preferably, the method includes vector quantisation of the image, the vector quantisation being implemented using a self organising neural map to provide image data in the form of indices of a codebook.

Preferably, a threshold is applied to the magnitude of wavelet coefficients, and those which fall below the threshold are converted to zero coefficients.

Preferably, different codebooks are used for different sub-bands of the wavelet representation of the image.

Preferably, the indices of the codebook are subsequently coded using variable length entropy coding.

Preferably, a series of zero indices followed by a non-zero index is coded as a pair of values by the variable length entropy coding, a first value representing the number of zero indices in the series and the second value representing the value of the non-zero index.

Preferably, a threshold is applied to the indices of the codebook, and those indices which fall below the threshold are converted to zero indices.

Preferably, wavelet coefficients which fall above the threshold are reduced by the value of the threshold.

Preferably, the invention further comprises a method of decoding an image coded as described above, wherein where a truncated sequence of coded image data is received, the decoder decodes the image using the truncated sequence of coded image data and uses zero values in place of missing coded image data.

WO 01/15457

7

PCT/GB00/03156

Preferably, the coded image is a difference image which is added to a reference image to generate a decoded image, and artefacts at higher resolutions of the decoded image caused by the truncated sequence are removed by setting the higher resolution data to zero.

A specific embodiment of the invention will now be described by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Figure 1 is a block diagram representing a basic embodiment of the method;

Figure 2 is a schematic illustration showing the order in which wavelet coefficients are coded by the method;

Figure 3 is a schematic illustration showing the order in which an image coded using the method can subsequently be decoded;

Figure 4 is a block diagram representing an extended embodiment of the method, which includes motion compensation;

Figure 5 is a block diagram representing choice between the basic embodiment of the method and the extended embodiment of the method;

Figure 6 is a schematic diagram representing a two dimensional inverse transform, used to predict quantisation errors;

Figure 7 is a schematic representation of general vector quantisation encoding;

Figure 8 is a schematic representation of general vector quantisation encoding including noise;

Figure 9 is a graph representing distortion as a function of average bit rate, for different sizes of self organising neural maps as used by the embodiments of the invention;

Figure 10 is a first frame of a first sequence of video test images;

Figure 11 is a first frame of a second sequence of video test images;

Figure 12 is a graph showing the performance of the embodiments of the invention at 10kbits/second;

Figure 13 is a graph showing the performance of the embodiments of the invention at 28.8kbits/second; and

Figure 14 is a graph showing the performance of the embodiments of the invention at 64kbits/second.

The method converts images (frames) of a video sequence to a coded representation.

The method is arranged to code the images at a desired rate, so that coded images are presented to an input at the required frame rate. The method operates in a first order coding loop where only the instantaneous first derivative of the information is coded.

$$f'(z) = f(z)(1 - z^{-1})$$

In other words, an image to be coded is compared with a reference image, and differences between the images are coded. The efficiency of the coding loop relies on temporal redundancy between images in a sequence. Higher frame rates have greater temporal redundancy than lower rates for the same change of viewing scene, and the use of a first order coding loop is suited to frame rates of 2 frames/s or more.

A basic embodiment of the method is described, followed by an extended embodiment of the method which includes motion compensation.

A block diagram of the basic method is shown in figure 1. An image to be coded is first transformed to a discrete wavelet representation. Scalar quantisation is then used to remove redundant information from the input image. The quantisation is based upon a psychophysical model, and quantisation factors used are selected so that errors introduced by the quantisation are below a visibility threshold. Differences between the (transformed) image and a predicted reference image are determined, and a resulting difference image is vector quantised to generate a set of codebook indices. The codebook indices are represented by indices of a variable length entropy codebook.

Because the codebook indices are represented using a variable length entropy codebook, maximum objective information exploitation is achieved when the result of the image difference calculation produces small similar valued numbers. From a practical perspective this means mostly zeros and, if not zero as close to zero as possible. The efficiency of the method is therefore dependent to a large extent upon the input to the vector quantiser. The image difference calculation carried out prior to vector quantisation is 'encouraged' to produce small values by firstly stripping as

WO 01/15457

PCT/GB00/03156

9

much redundant information from the input image as possible (using the psychophysical quantisation step), and then secondly subtracting from it a best possible prediction of that input (i.e. the predicted reference image).

The method attempts to process images in a manner similar to the human visual system. This allows the method to maximise the removal of subjective information redundancy, i.e. information to which the human visual cortex does not respond. Such information is defined by non-conscious processing of the brain such as edge and texture separation, frequency sensitivity and masking effects. The term non-conscious is used here to differentiate it from the Freudian unconscious terminology.

From a simple model of the human visual system, the first area of subjective information redundancy exists in the eye's sensor mechanism. The eye is conditioned to be more sensitive to luminance information than chrominance. Therefore the method is provided with a front end (not shown in figure 1) which represents the images by separate luminance (Y) and chrominance (U and V) components, the chrominance spatial resolution being a factor of two less than the luminance resolution. The nomenclature for this colour space is represented by the ratios of the components as YUV 4:1:1.

The visual cortex is responsible for non-conscious processing of visual information presented to it by the eye's sensor mechanism. The visual information is separated into textures and edges of various orientations which are processed at differing resolutions. The method uses multiresolution wavelet transform because it simulates the way in which non-conscious vision processing is performed. The sensitivity of the cortex to sub-bands of the wavelet transformed image is not constant, i.e. the cortex is less sensitive to diagonal lines than it is to horizontal and vertical lines. The order in which the multiresolution wavelet transform is coded reflects this, with horizontal and vertical detail being given priority over diagonal detail.

The wavelet transform is implemented as a discrete wavelet transform (DWT) which is implemented using a lifting technique with coefficients derived from 9-7 biorthogonal filter coefficients known to be suitable for image coding applications [Villasenor J.D., Belzer B., Liao J.

Wavelet Filter Evaluation for Image Compression. IEEE Transactions on Image Processing, Vol. 4, No. 8, August 1995, pp. 1053 – 1060].

Any other suitable biorthogonal filter coefficients may be used. From an objective information redundancy viewpoint the choice of biorthogonal filter coefficients is important when producing image decompositions with the minimum number of significant valued coefficients. A discussion of how to choose appropriate biorthogonal filter coefficients is included in the paper by Villasenor, Belzer and Liao 1995 [see above].

The discrete wavelet transform is chosen in preference to a harmonic transform, such as a discrete cosine transform, because it is more suited to representing continuous-tone images composed mostly of large smooth areas and sharp edged boundaries, as is commonly seen in a video coding environment. Harmonic transforms are not suited to visual data of this sort, particularly at edges, because they produce many significant valued coefficients.

Referring again to figure 1, an input image following the DWT and psychophysical quantisation has a stored predicted reference DWT image subtracted from it on a wavelet coefficient by wavelet coefficient basis. A set of sub-band vector quantisers, one for each resolution level, orientation and colour component, is used to quantise the difference coefficient image. The bit rate is partially controlled by a parameter that thresholds the vector coefficients before quantisation. The codebook indices are entropy coded and therefore the output bit rate is dependent on the operational parameters of the vector quantiser. The operationally optimal vector quantiser for each sub-band is found by selecting the most suitable operating point on a distortion-rate function for that sub-band. Suitability is determined from both sub-space coverage and a practical entropy code perspective.

The method incorporates two cognitive factors. Firstly, in human vision objects are recognised as a whole before filling in detail, low resolution information being noted before high resolution information. For example, a person using video telephony will note a human head and shoulders before attempting to recognise an individual. Secondly, human vision tends to be foveated, i.e. the area of greatest visual sharpness

WO 01/15457

11

PCT/GB00/03156

is that point towards which the eyes are directed. This is especially true when tracking a moving object. For video telephony, it is most likely that a face will be focussed on and will usually be in the centre of the image. Therefore it is most profitable for coding of images to be centre biased. The method takes note of the above aspects of human vision by coding each difference frame vector from the lowest resolution DWT sub-band to the highest, in a spiral arrangement of wavelet coefficients which extends from the centre outwards within each sub-band. As mentioned above, luminance components are favoured over chrominance components.

Figure 2 represents schematically the order in which wavelets of a difference image are vector quantised for a two level DWT decomposition, level 2 being a low level of detail and level 1 being a high level of detail. Figure 2 is for illustrative purposes only, and it should be noted that the embodiment of the method uses a 4 level DWT decomposition. Referring to a lower left hand corner of figure 2, the method begins with the lowest level of detail (box labelled LL) of the difference image (level 2). This may be thought of as a thumbnail difference image. The method begins with four wavelet coefficients at a central point of the thumbnail difference image, as represented by a block labelled A in the centre of the box labelled LL. The wavelet coefficients are vector quantised by comparing them as a whole with a codebook specific to the LL sub-band, and allocating an index of the codebook to them (the index is a single number representative of the four wavelet coefficients). Four adjacent wavelet coefficients, as represented by a block labelled B are then vector quantised by comparing them with the codebook specific to the LL sub-band. The order in which wavelet coefficients are vector quantised is shown by the spiral arrangement of arrows in the box labelled LL. In this way, a series of codebook indices are generated in a sequence, the first few indices of the sequence representing wavelet coefficients of high importance (i.e. wavelets at or close to the centre of the image), and subsequent indices representing wavelet coefficients of gradually decreasing importance (i.e. wavelets at or close to edges of the image).

Following vector quantisation of the level 2 thumbnail difference image (LL), level 1 information representative of horizontal elements of the difference image (LH) is vector quantised. The vector quantisation is carried out for blocks of four wavelet

coefficients, and is arranged in a spiral. Following vector quantisation of the LH difference image, level 2 information representative of vertical elements of the difference image is vector quantised in a similar manner.

Level 1 information representative of horizontal elements of the difference image (LH) is vector quantised in the same manner as described above (for blocks of four wavelet coefficients). The level 1 horizontal difference image (LH) is vector quantised before the level 2 diagonal difference image (HH), because the level 1 horizontal difference image information is considered to be more important from a psychophysical perspective (the human cortex is not as responsive to diagonal lines as it is to either horizontal or vertical).

Level 1 information representative of vertical elements of the difference image (HL) is vector quantised, followed by level 2 information representative of diagonal elements of the difference image (HH), followed by level 1 information representative of diagonal elements of the difference image (HH).

It should be noted that vector quantisation of the level 2 thumbnail difference image (LL) and each subsequent image is carried out first for wavelets representative of the luminance (Y) of the image, and then for wavelets representative of the two chrominance components (U and V) of the image.

The indices generated by the vector quantisation are coded in real time using variable length entropy coding, as represented in figure 1 (the method does not include a buffer). Coded information representative of the image begins with the most important information relating to the image, and decreases gradually to the least important information relating to the image.

The order in which coded information relating to an image is generated by the method is as follows: wavelet coefficients of a luminance (Y) representation of a level 4 thumbnail difference image (LL) starting at the centre of the thumbnail image and spiralling outwards (this is done for every difference image), wavelet coefficients of a first chrominance (U) representation of the level 4 thumbnail difference image (LL), wavelet coefficients of a second chrominance (V) representation of the level 4

thumbnail difference image (LL) (all difference images are represented separately as Y,U and V wavelet coefficients), level 4 horizontal information (LH) difference image, level 4 vertical information (HL) difference image, level 3 horizontal information (LH) difference image, level 3 vertical (HL) difference image, level 4 diagonal information (HH) difference image, level 2 horizontal information (LH) difference image, etc.

The majority of the wavelet coefficients for a given image will be zeros. This is especially true when differences between image frames are small, since the wavelet coefficients represent a difference image. Referring to figure 2, a block (i.e. vector) of four zero wavelet coefficients is termed a zero vector and is allocated an index of zero. Coding of vectors proceeds in sequence, counting the zero vectors until a non-zero vector is encountered (this is referred to as a zero run). The run of zero vectors and a codebook index representing the non-zero vector are entropy coded with respective codes. Thus, a difference image containing many zero vectors will be entropy coded with a small number of bits.

Where the method is used in a communications application, the importance of coded information arriving at a receiver will decrease gradually over time for a given image. This feature of the method provides a primary advantage, namely that the amount of information sent to a receiver can be adjusted to precisely match the bandwidth of a communications link. For a given bandwidth, coded information representative of an image which fills that bandwidth is transmitted across the communications link, and any further information is discarded.

If the number of bits generated by an entropy coded pair when added to the current running total of bits is less than the frame bit limit, then the two entropy codes are added to the bit stream. This process continues until the frame bit limit is reached, at which point no further bits are transmitted to a receiver. The bit limit will in general occur partway through coded information relating to a DWT difference image of a detail level (i.e. referring to figure 2, partway through a spiral).

A receiver which receives a frame using a method according to the present invention includes the inverse of the variable length encoder and the feedback loop of figure 1.

The image is reconstructed in the same order in which it was coded, i.e. beginning with the most important information and adding detail of gradually decreasing importance. Thus, where the bandwidth of a communications link is very low, the level of detail of the reconstructed image will be correspondingly low but the psychovisually most important parts of the image will be present in the reconstructed image. All of the information received at the decoder, including code immediately preceding the bit limit for a given image (i.e. referring to figure 2, part of a spiral) is used by the decoder to reconstruct the image.

All vectors greater than the bit limit are assumed to be zero by the decoder.

The method is particularly applicable to communications links in which the bandwidth varies continually and over a wide range, for example the internet. The entire bandwidth available at any given time (or a selected portion of the bandwidth) is used to transmit coded image information. Known prior art coding methods are not capable of being used in this way.

'End-of-sub-band' and 'end-of-image' markers are included for bit stream synchronisation. 'End-of-sub-band' markers allow the receiver to partially decode the bit stream such that a 'thumbnail' representation (lower resolution) of the image may be viewed during reception. This is particularly useful for monitoring communications sessions or scanning stored video databases.

Artefacts may be generated by the coding method as a result of producing coded vectors of variable length, per frame in the ordered sequence. During periods of low temporal activity the ordered vector sequence will reach high resolution sub-bands of the wavelet representation without exceeding the number of bits allowed to code that frame (the number of bits may for example be determined by the bandwidth of the communication link). If this is followed by a burst of temporal activity, then the ordered sequence of coded information will reach only low resolution wavelet sub-bands (for a communication link of the same bandwidth), and will implicitly code zero change in higher wavelet sub-bands. The visual effect of the temporal activity will be to leave motionless high frequency edge components superimposed on the moving image. This artefact is referred to as the 'shower door' effect. To alleviate

WO 01/15457

15

PCT/GB00/03156

the effect, the high resolution sub-band vectors in the decoded image are set to zero by the decoder from the centre out. The decoder will set to zero any vectors that are not coded for a current image and which were coded in a preceding image. Thus, the vectors are set to zero for increasing resolutions from the centre of the image outwards, until the foveated point reached by the last coded sub-band of the preceding image. To allow for differing vector dimensions in each sub-band (i.e. referring to figure 2, different sizes of blocks), the foveated point is calculated as a fraction of the sub-band ordered sequence.

The extended embodiment of the method includes motion compensation. Motion compensation is used to reduce the amount of information in the difference image for more efficient coding. The motion compensation tracks spatial translational motion between images in the video sequence. DWT domain motion compensation has some advantages over the spatial domain motion compensation (for example as used by the H263 algorithm), in terms of the visual artefacts generated in those cases where the approximation error is large. Spatial domain motion compensation produces annoying blocking effects, whereas less objectionable speckled noise is produced from DWT domain compensation.

A block diagram of the extended method is shown in figure 4. The basic principle of the DWT domain motion estimation and compensation proceeds in the following manner. After the subjective information has been removed from the current DWT domain image (psychophysical quantisation), motion is estimated with each two-dimensional block of spatially corresponding coefficients within each sub-band and colour component (chrominance estimation is optional) of a stored reference image. Within each sub-band the block dimension (i.e. the number of wavelet coefficients to which vector quantisation is applied to generate a single index) is chosen to be the same as the block dimension of the corresponding vector quantiser (see figure 2), to allow the foveated sequence to proceed on a block-by-block basis without overlap. Extending the sub-band boundaries with zero valued coefficients permits motion vectors from outside the sub-band. This increases the estimation accuracy for the (MSE) matching block is written into the reference image to provide a motion

compensated reference image. The compensated reference image is then subtracted from the input image and is vector quantised. The estimated motion vectors are coded directly using variable length coding as shown in figure 4.

Examples of block based motion estimation and compensation which could be used are as follows:

1. Apply the inverse DWT within the coding loop and motion estimate and compensate in the spatial domain. This approach ensures the maximum motion accuracy but increases the coding complexity [Nosratinia A., Orchard M.T. *A Multi-Resolution Framework for Backward Motion Compensation*. SPIE Proceedings on Digital Video Compression: Algorithms and Technologies, Vol. 2419, 1995, pp. 190 – 200].
2. Motion estimate and compensate within the DWT domain and accept the accuracy limitations at each level [Zhang Y.Q., Zafar S. *Motion-Compensated Wavelet Transform Coding for Color Video Compression*. IEEE Transactions on Circuits and Systems for Video Technology, Vol. 2, No. 3, September 1992, pp. 285 – 296]. If the MSE of a motion compensated block is greater than that of some weighted value of the pixel energy then, no motion vector is coded [Mandal M.K., Panchanathan S. *Motion Estimation Techniques for a Wavelet-based Video Coder*. SPIE Proceedings on Digital Video Compression: Algorithms and Technologies, Vol. 2668, 1996, pp. 122 – 128]. This limits the estimate inaccuracy from increasing the bit rate.

In both approaches advantage may be taken of the multiresolution structure of the DWT for inter level prediction to reduce the general multiresolution redundancy in natural images and reduce the coding complexity. However the partial inverse DWT may be required for the estimation process because there is no direct evidence that the coefficients at lower level sub-bands may be predicted from the higher levels without using the reconstructed $L_x L_y$ sub-bands.

There is generally little motion between consecutive frames in a video sequence particularly in the background. Therefore zero motion vectors will be statistically most likely. The motion vector foveated sequence is coded in a similar manner to the

WO 01/15457

17

PCT/GB00/03156

zero run length encoding of vectors applied to the indices of the vector quantisers. For each non-zero motion vector in the sequence, a zero run length and the two motion vector components are entropy coded and added to the output bit stream provided the frame bit limit is not exceeded.

The zero run length encoding of the motion vectors is particularly important for very low bit rate video coding algorithms where an added bit overhead could offset the quality gained by motion compensation. For small movement within video scenes, as is possible in video telephony, many zero and small valued motion vectors will consume scarce bit resources. An added problem with block motion estimation is that it is possible for the compensated block to produce greater difference image energy than without compensation (i.e. more information is required to be coded). An uncompensated reference image block is equivalent to a compensated block with a zero motion vector. Therefore to improve the predicted reference image and to 'encourage' the zero motion vector for coding efficiency, a 'best choice' algorithm is used.

The 'best choice' algorithm is implemented in a block mean-square error (MSE) sense. The basis of the choice is determined by vector quantising the difference image blocks from both the motion compensated and uncompensated images and choosing the vector quantised block with the lowest quantisation error. If the uncompensated block is chosen, then the zero vector is associated with it. The process is diagrammatically illustrated in figure 5.

The decoder does not require any knowledge of the choice between the uncompensated block and compensated block, since the zero vector implicitly refers to an uncompensated block.

The 'best choice' algorithm with run length coding of the zero motion vectors ensures a minimal bit cost for both low temporal activity and high temporal activity.

Several parts of the method are described in more detail below, followed by examples.

Psychophysical quantisation of an image, as represented in figures 1 and 4 is described in the following paragraphs. The psychophysical quantisation uses scalar quantisation. As mentioned above, the goal of psychophysical quantisation is to remove about the image subjective information redundancy. The degree to which spatial frequency representations of images may be shaped depends on the frequencies observed by a human viewer.

The two-dimensional DWT used here by the method consists of a frequency and orientation sub-division process. The multiresolution filtering and sub-sampling in the horizontal and vertical directions divides the signal into octave frequency sub-bands with horizontal, vertical and diagonal orientations. The DWT process may therefore be considered as a discrete approximation to the physiological process that takes place in the model for the human visual cortex [Mallat S.G. *Multifrequency Channel Decompositions of Images and Wavelet Models*. IEEE Transactions on Acoustics, Speech, and Signal Processing, Vol. 37, No. 12, December 1989, pp. 2091 - 2110].

The embodiment of the method uses an efficient quantisation strategy developed to take advantage of the modelled physiological processing of the human visual cortex. The visibility of quantisation errors for all colour components at all DWT levels and orientations has been determined from a set of subjective experiments [Watson A.B., Yang G.Y., Solomon J.A., Villaseñor J. *Visual Thresholds for Wavelet Quantization Error*. SPIE Proceedings on Human Vision and Electronic Imaging, B. Rogowitz and J. Allebach, Editors., Vol. 2657, Paper No. 44, 1996]. Using this information, a psychophysical model customised for the two-dimensional DWT coefficients is established. The resulting fitted model for the threshold of visibility, T , as a function of spatial frequency, f , and orientation, θ , is as follows:

$$T(f, \theta) = a.10^{\left(\log \frac{f}{f_0} \right)^2}$$

The approximated model parameters are given in Table 1.

WO 01/15457

19

PCT/GB00/03156

Colour	a	k	f_0	g_{LxLy}	g_{LxHy}	g_{HxLy}	g_{HxHy}
Y	0.495	0.466	0.401	1.501	1.0	1.0	0.534
U	1.633	0.353	0.209	1.520	1.0	1.0	0.502
V	0.944	0.521	0.404	1.868	1.0	1.0	0.516

Table 1: Threshold Model Parameters

The successive application of the DWT at each level, l , results in halving of the sub-band frequency bandwidth. For a display with a maximum spatial frequency of f_{\max} :

$$BW_l = f_{\max} 2^{-l} \text{ [cpd]}$$

where cpd indicates cycles per degree of the viewer's vision (this depends upon the size of the decoded image and the distance of the viewer from the decoded image). The centre frequency of each sub-band is used as the nominal frequency for the development of the quantisation process.

$$f_{lc} = 3f_{\max} 2^{-(l+1)} \text{ [cpd]}$$

The visibility of quantisation errors introduced at a particular level and orientation may be approximated by the amplitude of the DWT synthesis filters for that level and orientation. This approximation is implementation and filter bank dependent. The introduction of quantisation errors at level $(m+1)$ for an inverse DWT process is shown in figure 6.

Each sub-band is up-sampled by two in the vertical direction, then a convolution is performed with the relevant one-dimensional synthesis filter, multiplied by a factor of two and summed to form vertical groups. The vertical groups are similarly up-sampled followed by the convolution, multiplication by two and summed, but in the horizontal direction. The resulting effect on the image at level 'm' is then propagated through the remaining image levels to the reconstructed image. Considering only the most significant term of the linear convolution process approximates the amplitude of the error per level. For example, the effect of an error in a low-pass horizontal and a high-pass vertical orientation ($LxHy$) at one level may be approximated as follows,

$$E_{LxHy} = |(e_{LxHy} * g * h)2^1| = 2^2 |e_{LxHy} g_0 h_0|$$

Therefore the effect of an error at level m for each orientation, on the entire reconstructed image may be written as:

$$E_{m,LxLy} \approx 2^{-m} |e_{m,LxLy} h_0|,$$

$$E_{m,LxHy} \approx 2^{2m} |e_{m,LxHy} g_0 h_0 h_0^{2(m-1)}|,$$

$$E_{m,HxLy} \approx 2^{2m} |e_{m,HxLy} h_0 g_0 h_0^{2(m-1)}|,$$

and,

$$E_{m,HxHy} \approx 2^{2m} |e_{m,HxHy} g_0^2 h_0^{2(m-1)}|.$$

A biorthogonal wavelet filter bank that performs well for image compression applications, is the spline-based set with filter coefficient lengths of nine and seven [Villasenor *et al*, see above]. The approximate amplitudes of error visibility for this filter bank with a root-two bias as required for the inverse DWT described above, to four levels and all orientations of the DWT process are given in Table 2.

	Level			
Orientation	1	2	3	4
LxLy	1.2430	1.5461	1.9224	2.3904
LxHy	1.3447	1.6720	2.0790	2.5851
HxLy	1.3447	1.6720	2.0790	2.5851
HxHy	1.4542	1.8082	2.2483	2.7956

Table 2: Quantisation Error Visibility to DWT Level 4

A quantisation factor is required for each colour and sub-band such that the resulting quantisation error is below the visibility threshold. For a linear quantiser with a factor of Q , the worst case error is $Q/2$. Therefore the quantisation strategy used by the method for the psychophysical scalar quantisation is:

$$T(f, o) = V(l, o) \frac{Q(l, o)}{2}$$

The quantisation visibility term, V is defined by the DWT process such as that given in Table 2. The operational quantisation factors used by the method are formed as follows:

$$Q(l, o) = \frac{2}{V(l, o)} T(f, o)$$

$$Q(l, o) = \frac{2}{V(l, o)} \cdot 10^{\left(\log \frac{f_{lc}}{f_o} \right)^2}$$

$$Q(l, o) = \frac{2}{V(l, o)} \cdot 10^{\left(\log \frac{2f_{lc}}{2^{(l-1)} f_o} \right)^3}$$

where $V(l, o)$ refers to the level and orientation error visibility values set out in table 2.

The quantisation factors provide an overall shape that may be applied to the DWT coefficients of an image to achieve an imperceptible difference with the original image. For low bit rate applications where greater quality loss is tolerated, the quantisation shape is uniformly scaled to ensure that the largest errors are confined to the least responsive regions of the human psychophysical system.

Referring to figure 1 and figure 4, psychophysical scalar quantisation (as described above) is followed by the generation of a difference image. Vector quantisation is then applied to the difference image. The following paragraphs describe the vector quantisation of the difference image. The method uses a self organising neural map (SOM) which through the use of training images provides a solution to the problem of how to apply vector quantisation efficiently.

The generation of a vector quantiser solution requires formulating a cost function to be minimised and describing the conditions of optimality for that cost function. General vector quantisation theory is discussed herein to lay a foundation for showing how the trained SOM used by the method achieves the same optimal solution. A noise model of the vector quantiser produces a similar gradient descent training algorithm as that of the SOM. Operationally optimal vector quantisers for a signal compression environment may be found by varying the training set of the SOM. The

entropy is approximated as a rate-constraint and results in a natural extension to the SOM training algorithm.

A basic encoder-decoder model for a vector quantiser is shown in figure 7 [Gersho A., Gray R.M. Vector Quantization and Signal Compression. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Boston, 1992]. The processes discussed in the prior art all assume a high resolution case where the number of codewords, N , is very large i.e. $N \rightarrow \infty$.

The vector quantisation problem may be considered as an optimal approximation process of an input space to an output space that, in the case of signal compression, is itself a subset of the input space. A vector, x , of dimension k from the input space, X^k , (where $X \in \mathbb{R}$, the set of real numbers) is the input to the encoder. The encoder maps the input space to a codebook C that consists of N codewords. The encoding process may be written as: $E: X^k \rightarrow C$ where $C = \{c_i(x)\}_{i \in I}$. The process is fully defined by either the index into the codebook, $i \in I$, or the codeword itself, $c_i(x)$, and therefore it is usual for only the index, or a symbolic representation thereof, to be transmitted on the communications channel to the decoder. The encoding process is the quantisation process that, in general, is lossy in that the codebook size is limited, $|C| = \max\{i\} = N < \infty$. The decoder maps the codebook back into the input space and may be written as: $D: C \rightarrow X^k$ where the reconstructed vector $y \in X^k$.

The compression mechanism of vector quantisation is achieved by the dimension reduction process from a vector in space X^k to an integer index, i . The premises for the mechanism is that the signal space covered by x is a sub-space of X^k and that it is a stationary random process with an underlying joint probability density function (pdf), $f(x)$, such that $f(x) \rightarrow 0$ as $x \rightarrow \pm\infty$ defined as $\{x_1 \rightarrow \pm\infty, x_2 \rightarrow \pm\infty, \dots, x_k \rightarrow \pm\infty\}$.

Generating optimal or near optimal vector quantisers for the signal sub-space is achieved by minimising a suitable cost function in a long term average sense where the cost function is itself defined as a stationary random process. If the cost function and the sub-space pdf are smooth functions, or may be approximated by smooth functions, and hence are differentiable everywhere, then gradient descent methods may be used to find near optimal solutions for sometimes intractable analytical

solutions. The most common approach is to minimise the mean squared error (MSE) distortion in a Euclidean distance sense, because the performance of the resulting vector quantiser is usually measured by the MSE criterion. The function to minimise may be written as:

$$D = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \|x - y\|^2 f(x) dx \quad x, y \in R^k$$

Here the $\| \cdot \|$ operator represents the Euclidean distance. The optimal solution to the minimisation of D with respect to y , requires the joint minimisation of the *nearest-neighbour* condition and the *centroid* condition.

The *nearest-neighbour* condition describes the optimal encoder given a fixed decoder. This condition results in the input space being partitioned into regions, R_i , which may be termed as k -dimensional "volumes of influence" of the fixed codewords, $c_i = y_i$, in the codebook, C . The optimal region partitions are such that:

$$R_i = \{x : \|x - c_i\|^2 \leq \|x - c_j\|^2\} \quad j = 1 \dots N$$

Therefore:

$$\|x - y\|^2 = \min_i (\|x - c_i\|^2)$$

The region is chosen to minimise the squared error distortion with the given codebook.

The *centroid* condition describes the optimal decoder given a fixed encoder. The distortion integral, D , may be rewritten as:

$$\begin{aligned} D &= \sum_{i=1}^N \int_{R_i} \|x - c_i\|^2 f(x) dx \\ &= \sum_{i=1}^N P_i \int \|x - c_i\|^2 f(x | x \in R_i) dx \end{aligned}$$

Here P_i is the probability that x is in R_i , $P_i = \text{Prob}[x \in R_i]$ and $f(x | x \in R_i)$ is the conditional probability density function of x given that x is in R_i .

regions, R_i , are fixed and therefore each conditional term may be separately minimised, provided that P_i is non-zero. Therefore the centroid of region, R_i , is defined as that output vector, $y_i = c_i$, which minimises the distortion between itself and the input vector, x , where $x \in R_i$, over the entire conditional pdf.

$$y_i = \min_y \left[\int_{R_i} \|x - y\|^2 f(x | x \in R_i) dx \right]$$

Under the squared error distortion criterion the optimal solution is the centroid of each region.

$$y_i = \int_{R_i} x f(x | x \in R_i) dx$$

An iterative batch mode algorithm may be used to find an optimal or near-optimal solution to these two conditions for a given input distribution. The process involves finding an optimal region partition for a given codebook and then finding the optimal codebook for the given partitions. Many such algorithms and operational derivatives exist for this process [Linde Y., Buzo A., Gray R.M. *An Algorithm for Vector Quantizer Design*. IEEE Transactions on Communications, Vol. 28, January 1980, pp. 84 - 95; Gresho *et al*, see above].

A vector quantiser noise model is now described. Consider the gradient descent training process of an optimal high resolution vector quantiser. During the early stages of the training process there is a large error between the input, x , and output, y . As the process continues and the global minimum is approached, the error decays to some small value, which, in the high resolution case, may be made arbitrarily small. If the error is assumed to be independent of the input, then it may be modelled by a smooth zero-mean Gaussian distributed random variable. The model in figure 7 may be modified to produce the noise model of a vector quantiser [Luttrell S.P. *Self-organization: A derivation from first principle of a class of learning algorithms*. IEEE Conference on Neural Networks, Washington, DC, 1989, pp. 495 - 498] shown in figure 8.

For this model, the optimal vector quantiser for vectors, \mathbf{x} , taken from a sample space defined by the underlying pdf, $f(\mathbf{x})$, in a squared error sense, is one that minimises the long term average distortion defined as:

$$D = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \left[\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{y}(\mathbf{c}(\mathbf{x}) + \mathbf{n})\|^2 \pi(\mathbf{n}) d\mathbf{n} \right] f(\mathbf{x}) d\mathbf{x}$$

Here $\pi(\mathbf{n})$ is the pdf of the additive noise. The optimal encoder for a given decoder then minimises the partial distortion measure:

$$pD_{e,x} = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{y}(\mathbf{c}(\mathbf{x}) + \mathbf{n})\|^2 \pi(\mathbf{n}) d\mathbf{n}$$

For a given input vector, \mathbf{x} , find the minimum distortion codeword, $\mathbf{c}(\mathbf{x})$, for all possible noise additions. The realisation of this equation may be simplified by assuming that $\pi(\mathbf{n})$ is smooth and the training process is nearing completion, so $\mathbf{n} \rightarrow 0$ and therefore $\pi(\mathbf{n}) \rightarrow 1$. The minimum condition then reduces to the *nearest-neighbour* condition of the previous noiseless model. The best-matching codeword, $\mathbf{c}(\mathbf{x})$, from the vector quantiser codebook, C , may be completely defined by its index, $i \in \{1 \dots N\}$, in the codebook (and vice versa).

$$i(\mathbf{x}) = \min_j \left\{ \|\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{y}(\mathbf{c}_j(\mathbf{x}) + \mathbf{n})\|^2 \right\}, \quad j = 1 \dots N$$

The optimal decoder for a given encoder is found by minimising the distortion measure with respect to the output, \mathbf{y} .

$$\frac{\partial D}{\partial \mathbf{y}} = -2 \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} [(\mathbf{x} - \mathbf{y}) \pi(\mathbf{n})] f(\mathbf{x}) d\mathbf{x}$$

Setting to zero and solving results in the *centroid* condition that may be used in an iterative batch mode algorithm.

$$\mathbf{y} = \frac{\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \mathbf{x} \pi(\mathbf{n}) f(\mathbf{x}) d\mathbf{x}}{\int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \pi(\mathbf{n}) f(\mathbf{x}) d\mathbf{x}}$$

However, a gradient descent algorithm for the decoder output vectors follows directly. Note that y is a function of c , and $n = c - c(x)$. Therefore, randomly sampling the input space that has a distribution defined by the pdf, $f(x)$, results in the following update step:

$$y_{i+1}(c_j) = y_i(c_j) + \eta_i \pi_i(c_j - c_i(x_i)) [x_i - y_i(c_j)], \quad j = 1 \dots N$$

Here η_i is the adaptive learning rate parameter and $c_i(x_i)$ is defined by the best-matching codeword from the *nearest-neighbour* condition at iteration i . If a zero-mean Gaussian function for $\pi(u)$ is imposed on the learning process, then the codewords, c_j , centred on the best-matching codeword, $c_i(x_i)$, will be 'brought nearer' in a squared error sense, to the centre codeword. Furthermore, by imposing an initially large radius Gaussian function and then decreasing it to zero during the training process, will result in a topologically ordered codebook, C .

The stochastic gradient descent algorithm for the encoder-decoder noise model is the same as the standard SOM algorithm with neuron indices defined by $i = \{1 \dots N\}$ and the neuron weights defined by y_i . The noise shape defines the neighbourhood function and ensures the topologically ordered property of the output space. Therefore the SOM algorithm will generate an optimal (or at least, near optimal) vector quantiser.

A rate-constrained self-organising neural map (SOM) is now described. Consider the application of a SOM trained as an optimal vector quantiser in a signal compression environment. The vector samples, x , are extracted from the signal and the index of the neuron whose weight vector has the lowest squared error distortion with x , is transmitted on the channel to the receiver. The receiver decodes the output vector, y , in a weight vector look-up table whose neuron index, i , is that received from the channel. Therefore the information conveyed over the communication channel is completely contained in the index. This raises the issue of efficient symbolic representation of the transmitted indices. Since only binary alphabet symbols are considered here, $A \in \{0, 1\}$, the index is represented by a variable length code, $v(i)$, whose average bit rate is upper-bounded by the uniform neuron firing distribution case of $B = \log_2 N$ bits per vector. The bit rate or bit length of the code will be denoted by its magnitude, $|v(i)|$.

For any joint pdf $f(x)$ of the input vector, x with dimension k , such that $f(x) \rightarrow 0$ as $x \rightarrow \pm\infty$, there exists an arbitrary low distortion SOM where N is finite and the neuron firing probabilities are described by a probability mass function (pmf), $p(i(x))$, such that $p(i(x)) \propto f(x)$. This premise is based on the density matching properties of the trained SOM [Kohonen T. Self-Organizing Maps. Springer-Verlag, New York, 2nd Edition, 1997; Haykin S. Neural Networks A Comprehensive Foundation. Macmillan College Publishing Company, New York, 1994]. An entropy coding method is therefore more efficient for transmitting the indices. From an information viewpoint the average entropy, in bits, is defined as:

$$H(i) = - \sum_{i=1}^N P_i \log_2 P_i$$

Here P_i is the *a posteriori* probability of index, i being the winning neuron which is identical to the vector quantiser definition, $P_i = \text{Prob}[x \in R_i]$. If a prefix-free variable length binary code is used and allowing non-integer code lengths, then the average length is the index entropy [Gresho *et al*; see above]. Therefore the length of the code to represent the index, i , is defined as:

$$|v(i)| = -\log_2 P_i$$

Note that practical entropy codes must possess integer multiple lengths and therefore this acts as an asymptotic lower bound. The long term average bit rate generated from the trained SOM is written as:

$$B = \sum_{i=1}^N P_i |v(i)|$$

The rate-constraint is constructed from the trade-off between rate, (required for compression), and distortion (required for image quality). For low bit rate coding we wish to sacrifice image quality for higher compression, but a quantitative analysis in the given coding environment is required in order to make a prudent choice of an operational point. An approximate operational distortion-rate function, for a fixed vector dimension and a given vector quantiser, $(c(r), y(c))$, may be constructed from the characteristics theory underlying entropy-constrained vector

quantisation [Chou P.A., Lookabaugh T., Gray R.M. *Entropy-Constrained Vector Quantization*. IEEE Transactions on Acoustics, Speech, and Signal Processing, Vol. 37, January 1983, pp. 31 - 42].

$$D^*(R) = \min_{\{y_i\}} \left\{ \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \left(\|x - y_i\|^2 - \lambda \log_2 P_i \right) f(x) dx \right\}$$

Here $E[\]$ is the statistical expected operator of a stationary random process. This equation defines the bounds of the region in the distortion-rate plane within which we are able to operate with the parameter restrictions of our particular coding environment.

Consider the trained SOM where the neighbourhood function has decayed to zero and hence, assuming the high resolution case, the noise pdf, $\pi(n)$ is approximated by the Dirac function. The operational average distortion, D^* is a minimum in the sense that it minimises the function:

$$D = E[\|x - y\|^2] = \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} \|x - y\|^2 f(x) dx$$

The *nearest-neighbor* and *centroid* conditions result in an optimal partitioning of the SOM weight space into the regions, R_i . The rate constraint, B which is approximated by $H(i)$ and introduced with a Lagrange multiplier, λ , to generate the operational distortion-rate function to be minimised.

$$D^*(R) = \sum_{i=1}^N P_i \int_{-\infty}^{\infty} (\|x - y_i\|^2 - \lambda \log_2 P_i) f(x | x \in R_i) dx$$

The integral for the noise pdf, $\pi(n)$, has been omitted for simplicity of representation but is required for the training process as the neighbourhood function. Note that the $\lambda \log_2 P_i$ term is a constant and therefore affects the *nearest-neighbour* condition but does not affect the *centroid* condition. The rate-constrained SOM is trained with the gradient decent algorithm to minimise the instantaneous cost function described as:

$$J_x = \|x - y_{i(x)}\|^2 - \lambda \log_2 P_{i(x)}$$

WO 01/15457

29

PCT/GB00/03156

An approximation for the *a posteriori* $P_i(x)$ is made at each step of the descent algorithm.

A rate constrained SOM algorithm is now described. For the training process of the SOMs, that are used as vector quantisers, to be considered meaningful, an appropriate training set must be formed. The training set must represent the input space, in the sense that its pdf is an approximation to pdf of the input space, which will be applied to the vector quantiser during normal operation. In a video coding environment where the difference images are quantised within a first order coding loop, the quantisation error will be propagated to the reference image. The error will be superimposed on the next difference image and will appear as an input to the vector quantiser. In this way quantisation errors will accumulate in time as subjectively annoying artefacts. This effect is exaggerated in low bit rate codecs where the number of neurons in the SOMs is restricted and the high resolution assumptions are not strictly valid. The problem may be reduced by dynamically adapting the training set during the training process.

The zero vectors are generally coded via some other mechanism (either a run-length approach or using a code/no code bit) and hence the training set consists only of non-zero difference vectors. The training set is formed from typical image differences and the addition of errors that the vector quantisers will make *after* training. However, knowledge of the final state of the quantisers is unknown during the training process, therefore error approximation is based on the current state. The applied training set is adapted at each iteration during the training process in the following manner. Two random samples, x_1 and x_2 , are selected from the difference image training set, T , at iteration t .

$$\{x_1(t), x_2(t)\} \in T$$

The update process of the SOM is performed with the first sample, x_1 . The error term, e_t , for this sample and the winning neuron weight vector, c_1 , is determined. Simulating the effect of this error in the coding loop generates the second training sample, x_2 , for the SOM. Therefore the training data, T_t , applied to the SOM at iteration t , may be described as:

$$T_t = \{x_1(t), x_2(t)\}$$

Here;

$$x_e(t) = x_2(t) - (x_1(t) - c_1(t))$$

The training process continues in this way with a difference image sample and an error adapted sample at each iteration. After initialising the SOM neuron weights with small random values and setting the occurrence frequency, F_j to unity for each neuron, the training proceeds by repeating the steps 1 to 5 defined as follows:

Step 1: Randomly sample the training space to establish $\{x_1(t), x_2(t)\}$.

Step 2: Determine the first winning neuron, i_1 :

$$i_1 = \min_j \left\{ \|x_1(t) - c_j(t)\|^2 - \lambda \log_2 P_j \right\}, \quad j = 1..N$$

$$P_j = \frac{F_j}{\sum_{j=1}^N F_j}$$

Step 3: Update the neighbourhood neuron weight values and the winning neuron occurrence frequency:

$$c_j(t+1) = c_j(t) + \eta(t) \pi_{j,i_1}(t) [x_1(t) - c_j(t)], \quad j = 1..N$$

$$F_{i_1} = F_{i_1} + 1$$

Here $\eta(t)$ is the exponential decaying learning rate parameter and $\pi_{j,i_1}(t)$ is the Gaussian exponential neighbourhood function with a linearly decaying radius centred on the winning neuron, i_1 .

Step 4: Determine $x_e(t)$ and find second winning neuron, i_2 :

$$i_2 = \min_j \left\{ \|x_e(t) - c_j(t)\|^2 - \lambda \log_2 P_j \right\}, \quad j = 1..N$$

Step 5: Update the second winning neuron weight values and occurrence frequency:

$$c_j(t+1) = c_j(t) + \eta(t) \pi_{j,i_2}(t) [x_e(t) - c_j(t)], \quad j = 1..N$$

$$F_{i_2} = F_{i_2} + 1$$

The heuristics of constraint parameter selection are now described. For a DWT-domain video coding environment each DWT sub-band exhibits differing statistical properties and probability distributions therefore optimal rate-distortion selections are based on different criteria depending on the sub-band. The sub-band multidimensional probability distributions can not be assumed to be Gaussian nor are infinite resolution approximations necessarily applicable to finite size SOMs. The training set is a sample collection of the input space and therefore the underlying pdf is not smooth.

In practical implementations the choice of sub-band vector dimension is limited by the image size. For example, QCIF image sizes permit vector dimensions of 4×4 , 2×2 , 2×2 and 1×3 at sub-band levels of 1, 2, 3 and 4, respectively. Furthermore, the SOM dimensions are restricted by the need for practical variable length codes. SOM sizes of 8×8 , 16×16 , 32×32 and 64×64 neurons are considered practical. Operational rate-distortion points versus λ plots are generated for all sub-bands and colour components and used to empirically select generic optimal points for constructing the vector quantisers.

Consider the results for the luminance, level 3 and $LxHy$ DWT sub-band at four different SOM sizes for a 2×2 dimensional vector, shown in figure 9.

The overall trendline shows the distortion-rate characteristic for the choice of SOM size. The characteristic could be described as a cost curve where the operating point is chosen depending on slope at that point. A low valued slope (> 1.75 bpp in figure 9) implies a small distortion cost per coding bit. The large negative slope (< 1.75 bpp) region implies a large bit cost for an improved distortion. From this line, the 32×32 SOM may be chosen as the most optimal under these operating parameters. However, for low bit rate coding the 16×16 SOM will give a gain of ≈ 0.5 bpp for an average loss of ≈ 1.0 pixel mean square error (MSE). In this way the operating point is chosen depending on the coding environment.

The thinner trendlines indicate the local convex hull for each SOM size. The 32×32 SOM has the typical non-increasing convex shape of high resolution smooth pdf

vector quantisers. However, as the number of neurons of the SOM is decreased and therefore the further away from the high resolution assumptions the vector quantiser operates, two phenomena begin to appear. A clear operational minimum distortion is observed, and multiple operating points for a given average bit rate appear. For the low resolution points it is conceivable that these phenomena may be attributed to a diminishing difference between the global minimum and the local minima for the now large 'volumes of influence' of each neuron in the SOM.

The selected 32x32 SOM shows that the locally optimal operating point is at a minimum. Each sub-band is analysed in the same way to produce an operational SOM size and Lagrange multiplier, λ .

Two video test sequences have been used to evaluate the basic embodiment of the method and the extended embodiment of the method. The test sequences are typical for video telephony environments, and are of the same subject at differing distances from the camera. The training difference images for the SOMs were not constructed from any of the test sequences and were taken from a different camera. The first images of the first test sequence is shown in figure 10, and the first image of the second test sequence is shown in figure 11.

The test sequences consist of colour images with 24 bits/pixel (bpp) (being 8 bits for red, green and blue components respectively) and with a QCIF pixel resolution (176 x 144 pixels). The frame rate is a constant 10 frames/s. For the purposes of comparison, the measure of output quality is considered from a peak signal to noise ratio (PSNR) perspective that is defined from the mean square error (MSE) between the original and the output images on a pixel-by-pixel basis for all colour components. For an input image, I_i , and a reconstructed output image, I_o , with pixel dimensions $M \times N$ and C colour components, the MSE is defined as:

$$MSE = \frac{1}{CMN} \sum_{c=1}^C \sum_{m=1}^M \sum_{n=1}^N (I_i(c,m,n) - I_o(c,m,n))^2$$

The PSNR is therefore defined as:

$$PSNR = 10 \log \frac{255^2}{MSE} \text{ [dB]}$$

For bit rate control a quality factor parameter was used to scale the DWT psychophysical model. An arbitrary quality factor range of $q = \{0...31\}$ was chosen for the psychophysical scaling, S , applied as a division factor for quantisation and a multiplier for inverse quantisation.

$$S = 1 + \frac{q}{4}$$

A threshold factor was applied to the difference image coefficients. The thresholding was applied in the following manner. If the absolute value of the coefficient was less than the threshold value then, it was set to zero. Otherwise, the threshold was subtracted from (added to) the positive (negative) coefficient. The purpose of the subtraction (addition) was to further 'encourage' small valued coefficient vectors.

The algorithm was applied with target bit rates of 10k bits/s, 28.8k bits/s and 64k bits/s with the quality and threshold factors set according to Table 3.

Test Sequence	Bit Rate (bits/s)	Quality Factor (q)	Threshold
First Sequence	10k	3	2
	28.8k	2	2
	64k	1	2
Second Sequence	10k	3	2
	28.8k	1	2
	64k	1	1

Table 3: Coding Quality and Threshold Parameters

A section of the distortion results from image frame numbers 200 to 300 for the two sequences, comparing the basic method and the extended motion compensated method, for 10k bits/s, 28.8k bits/s and 64k bits/s are shown in figures 12, 13 and 14 respectively. The images were decomposed to 4 levels with the DWT but the motion compensation was performed only for levels 1 to 3.

The extended method generally outperforms the basic method with distortion returns as the bit rate is decreased from 64k bits/s down to 10kbits/s. The 64k bits/s

case provides ≈ 1.5 dB gain, the 28.8k bits/s case ≈ 0.5 dB and approximately the same performance at 10k bits/s. The DWT domain motion estimation is more accurate in the high resolution sub-bands than at the low. At very low bit rates the constant frame rate constraint is likely to be such that the DWT domain motion estimation will not reach the higher resolutions. Therefore the contribution of the motion compensation to the gain becomes limited and considering that it only begins at DWT level 3. This is more apparent for scenes with higher temporal activity as in the first sequence where the basic method actually performs better. Here, the bit cost of coding the motion vectors outweighs their potential quality gain, although the difference is small.

Note that the sub-band vector quantisers are trained on and hence optimised for difference images that exclude motion compensation. Including motion compensated data in the training process should improve the performance of the extended method.

The effect of the constant frame bit constraint is apparent in the shape of the distortion shown in figures 12 to 14, and is consistent at all bit rates. Any sudden temporal activity in the sequence results in a large negative slope of PSNR (see for example frames 230 to 235 of the second sequence). There is more energy in the difference information that requires coding, and this means that either more bits must be used and/or the quality must decrease (distortion-rate trade-off). The constant bit constraint means that the quality is sacrificed. If the sudden temporal activity is followed by a period of low activity, the method will use this 'bit respite' to recover the quality of the coded image. This is indicated by positive PSNR slope following the decrease (see for example frames 236 to 250 of the second sequence). Note that the positive recovery slope is less than the negative quality degradation slope.

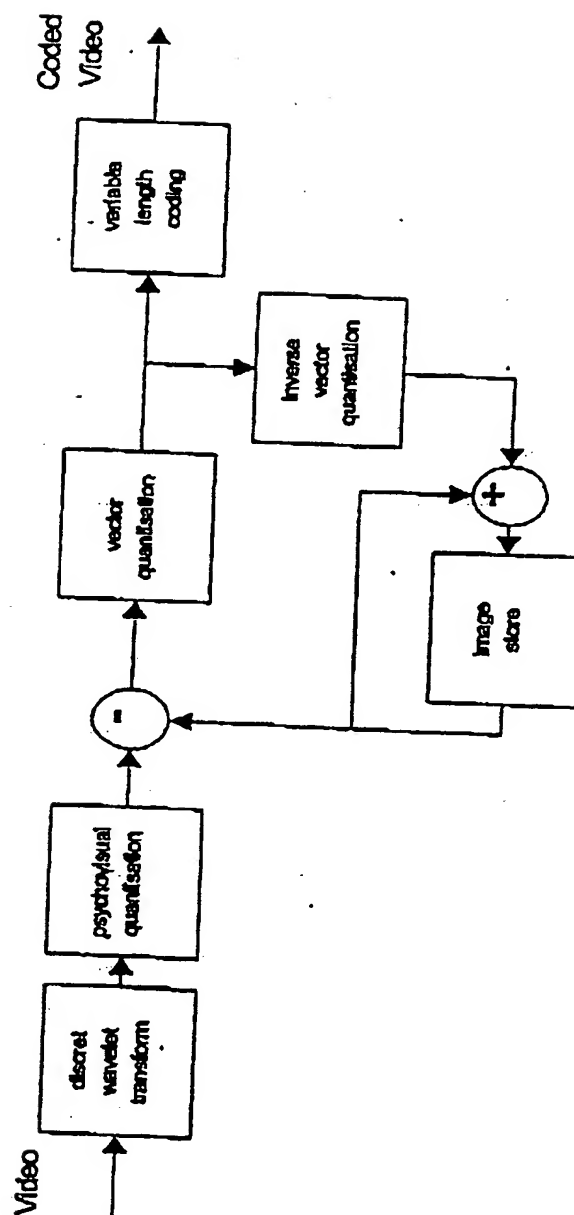
Claims

1. An image coding method comprising generating an ordered sequence of coded image data, the sequence beginning with coded data representative of an area of the image having high importance, and ending with coded data representative of an area of the image having lower importance.
2. An image coding method according to claim 1, wherein the importance of the image areas represented by the coded data decreases gradually over the ordered sequence.
3. An image coding method according to claim 2, wherein the image data coding sequence is arranged in a substantially spiral configuration centred on the area of importance.
4. An image coding method according to any preceding claim, wherein the area of importance is at a location selected as the most likely centre point of foveated vision of a viewer of the image.
5. An image coding method according to claim 4, wherein the area of importance is at a centre point of the image.
6. An image coding method according to any preceding claim, wherein the method includes converting an image into a multi-resolution representation, different resolution representations of the image being coded in sequence, the order of the sequence being determined to reflect psychophysical aspects of human vision.
7. An image coding method according to claim 6, wherein according to the sequence a luminance representation of the image is coded before chrominance representations of the image.
8. An image coding method according to claim 7, wherein for a given level of resolution the luminance representation is coded before the chrominance representations.

9. An image coding method according to any of claims 6 to 8, wherein the multi-resolution representation is generated using a wavelet transform, and the coding sequence comprises a wavelet representation of the image which increases from a low level of resolution to a high level of resolution.
10. An image coding method according to claim 9, wherein wavelet orientations of horizontal and vertical image components are coded before wavelet orientations of diagonal image components.
11. An image coding method according to claim 10, wherein wavelet orientations of diagonal image components of a given level of resolution are coded after wavelet orientations of horizontal and vertical image components of a higher resolution.
12. An image coding method according to any preceding claim, wherein the method is implemented as part of a communications system, and the amount of coded information output by the method for a given image is determined on an image by image basis in accordance with the available bandwidth of the communications system.
13. An image coding method according to claim 12, wherein where necessary in order to fully utilise the available bandwidth of the communications system includes a truncated sequence of coded image data, image data representative of areas of least importance having been excluded from the truncated sequence.
14. An image coding method according to any preceding claim, wherein a predetermined code is added to a sequence to indicate the end of image data representative of a particular aspect of the image.
15. An image coding method according to any preceding claim, wherein the image is one of a sequence of images, the image is compared to a reference image determined using preceding images of the sequence, and the coding method is used to code differences between the image and the reference image.

16. An image coding method according to any preceding claim, wherein scalar quantisation is used to minimise the amount of image data to be coded, the scalar quantisation being based upon a psychophysical model.
17. An image coding method according to any preceding claim, wherein the method includes an estimation of motion within an image as compared with a reference image, and the estimated motion is included in the coded image data.
18. An image coding method according to claim 17, wherein the method includes a choice between image data that has been coded using motion estimation and data that has been coded without using motion estimation, the choice being made upon the basis of minimising distortion of the coded image.
19. An image coding method according to any preceding claim, wherein the method includes vector quantisation of the image, the vector quantisation being implemented using a self organising neural map to provide image data in the form of indices of a codebook.
20. An image coding method according to claim 9 and claim 19; wherein a threshold is applied to the magnitude of wavelet coefficients, and those which fall below the threshold are converted to zero coefficients.
21. An image coding method according to claim 9 and claim 19, wherein different codebooks are used for different sub-bands of the wavelet representation of the image.
22. An image coding method according to any of claims 19 to 21, wherein the indices of the codebook are subsequently coded using variable length entropy coding.
23. An image coding method according to claim 22, wherein a series of zero indices followed by a non-zero index is coded as a pair of values by the variable length entropy coding, a first value representing the number of zero indices in the series and the second value representing the value of the non-zero index.

24. An image coding method according to claim 22 or claim 23, wherein a threshold is applied to the indices of the codebook, and those indices which fall below the threshold are converted to zero indices.
25. An image coding method according to claim 24, wherein wavelet coefficients which fall above the threshold are reduced by the value of the threshold.
26. A method of decoding an image coded in accordance with any preceding claim, wherein where a truncated sequence of coded image data is received, the decoder decodes the image using the truncated sequence of coded image data and uses zero values in place of missing coded image data.
27. A method of decoding an image according to claim 26, wherein the coded image is a difference image which is added to a reference image to generate a decoded image, and artefacts at higher resolutions of the decoded image caused by the truncated sequence are removed by setting the higher resolution data to zero.
28. An image coding method substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying figures.

FIG. 1

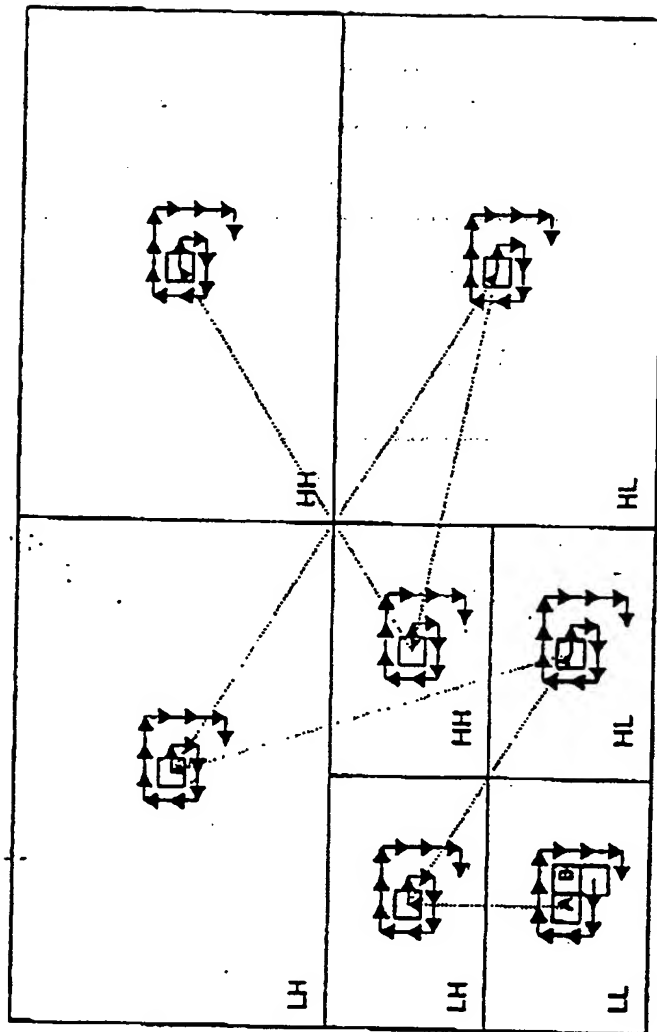
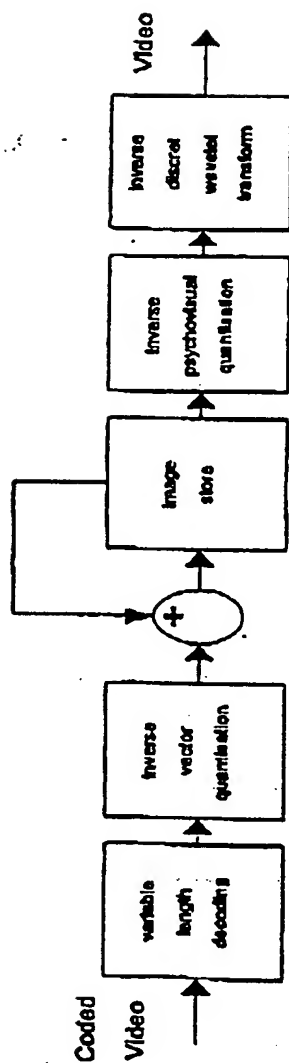
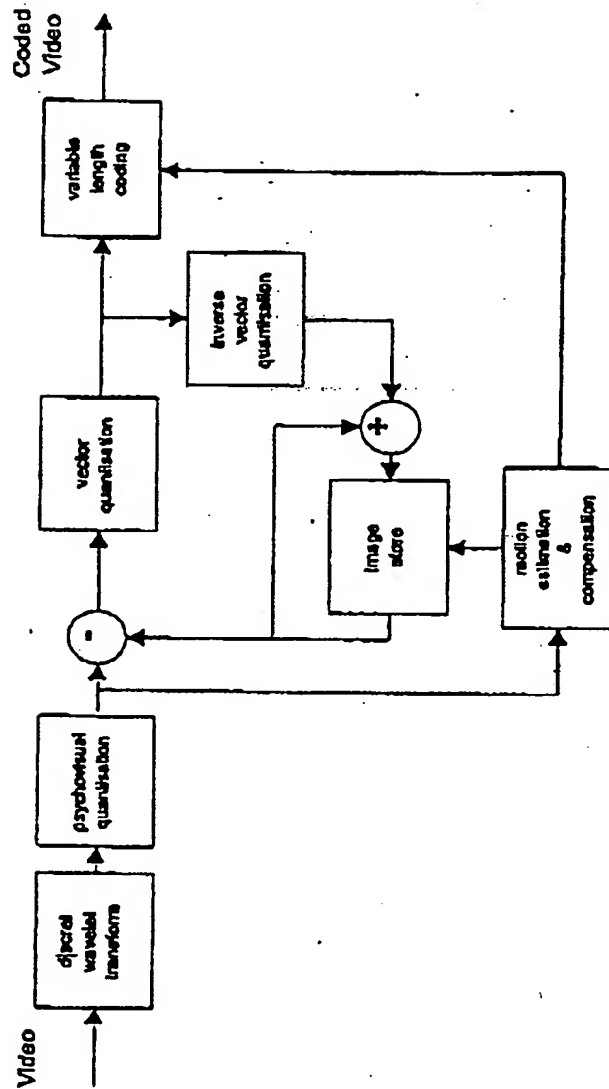
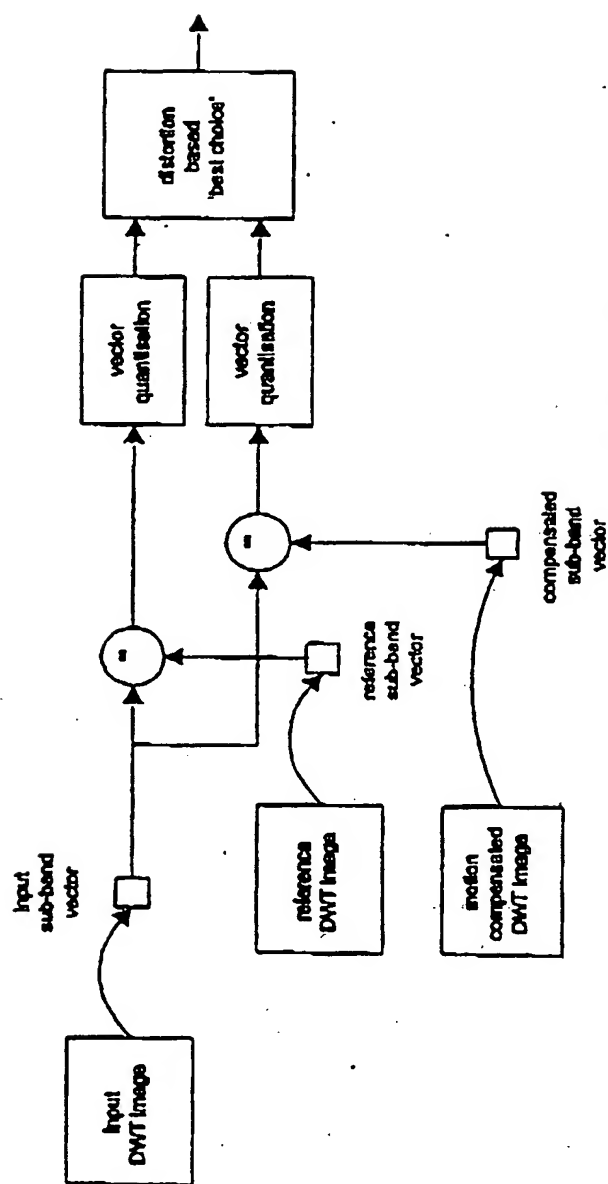


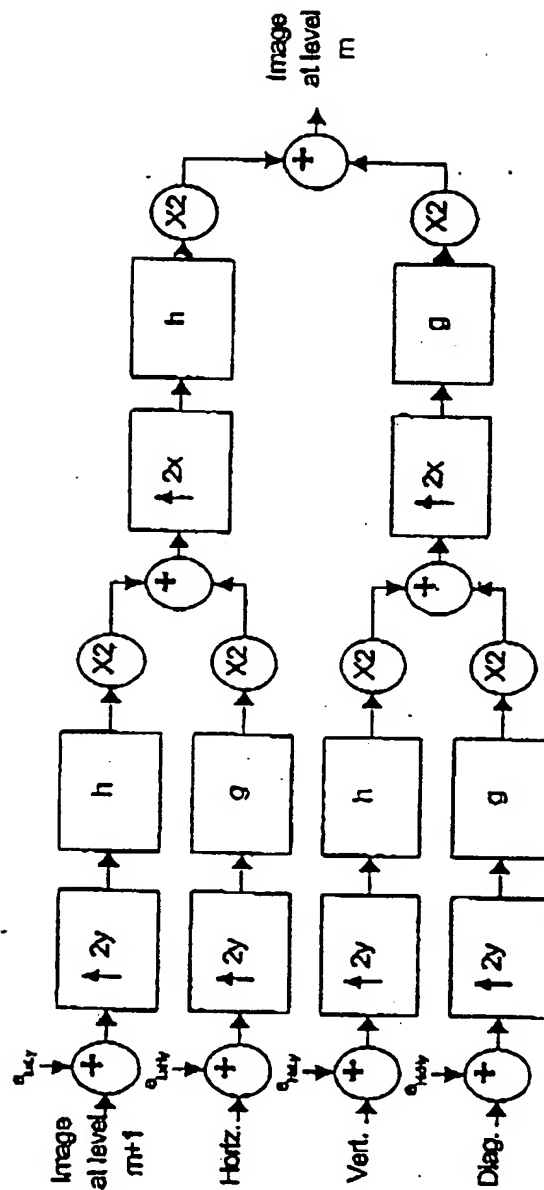
FIG. 2

10/069646

FIG. 3

FIG. 4

FIG. 5

FIG. 6

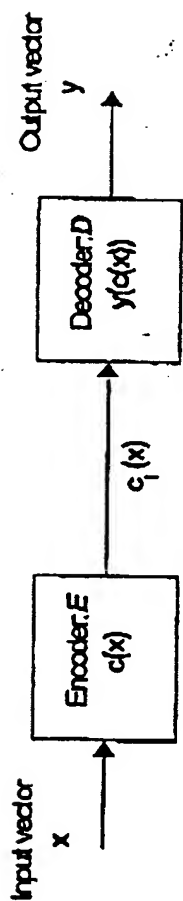


FIG. 7

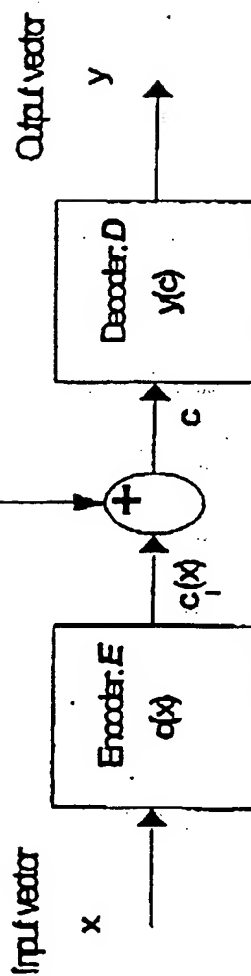
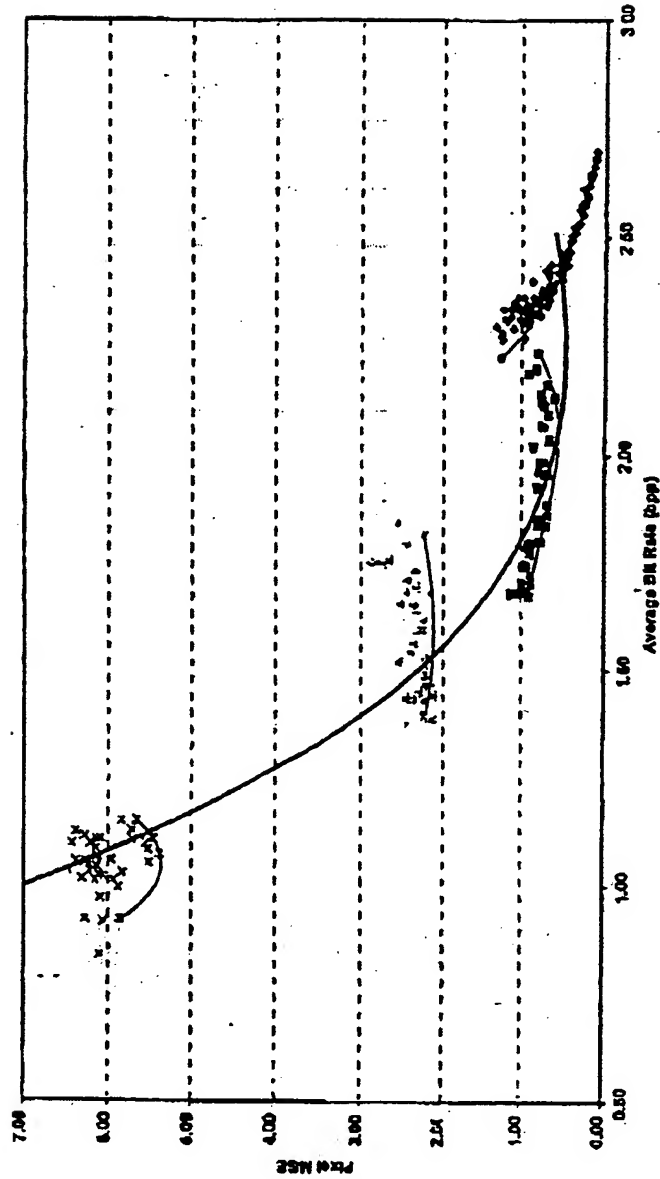


FIG. 8

**FIG. 9**

× N=8x8 neurons; ▲ N=16x16 neurons; ■ N=32x32 neurons; N=64x64 neurons.

9/12



FIG. 10

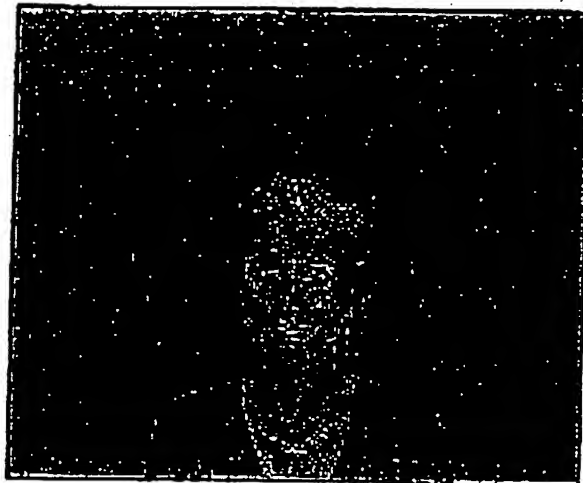
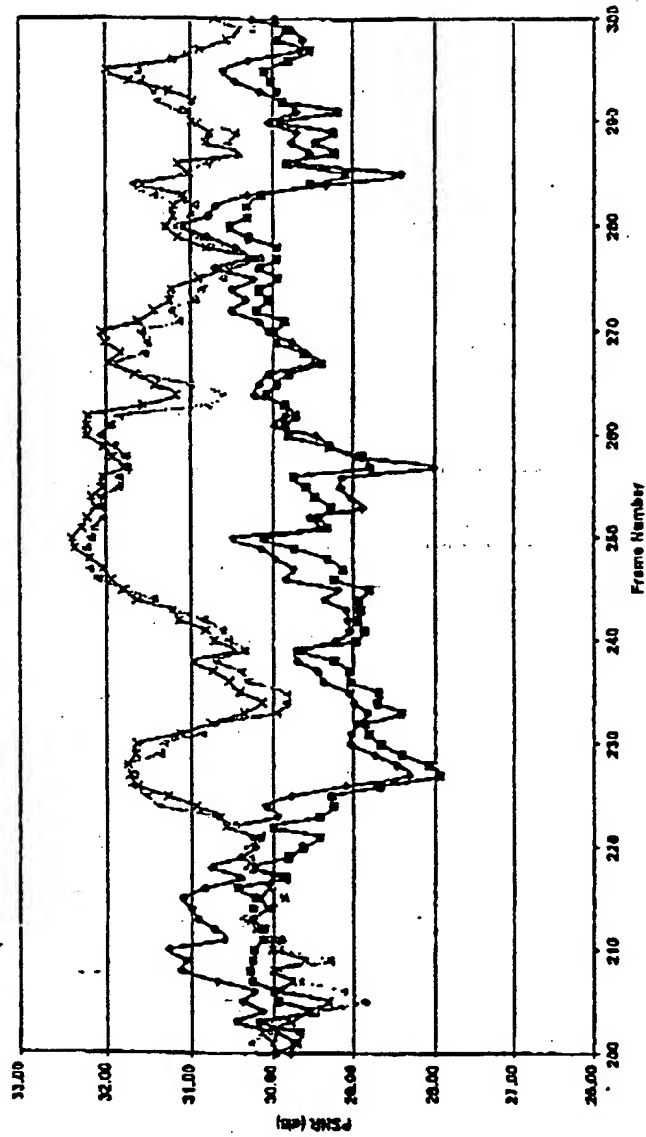
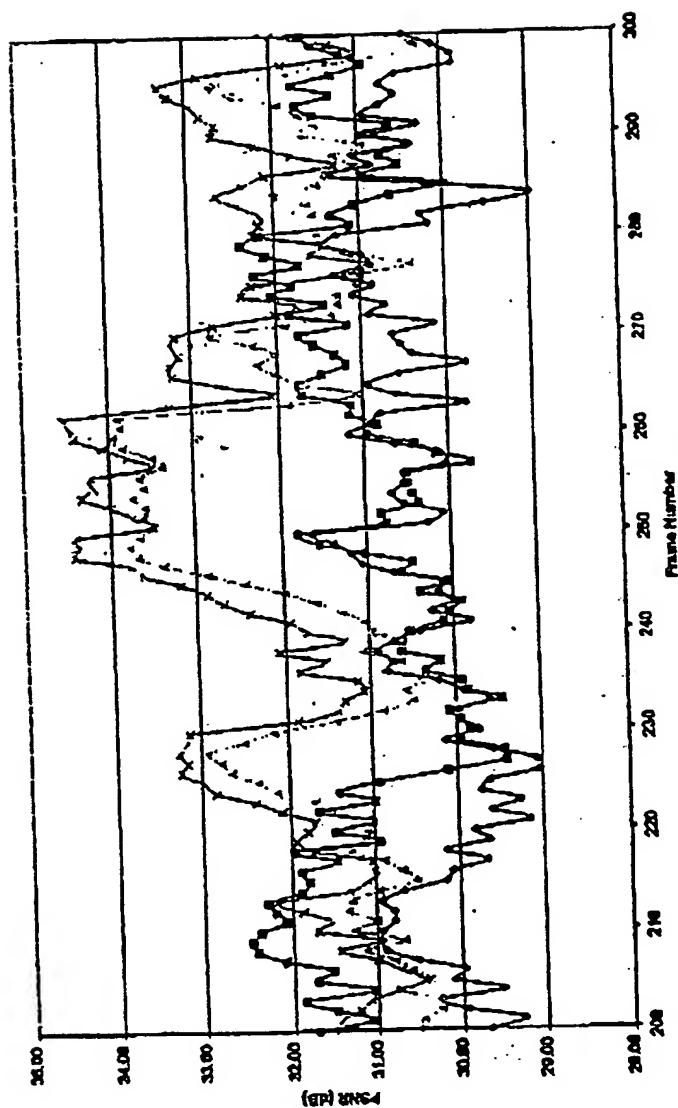


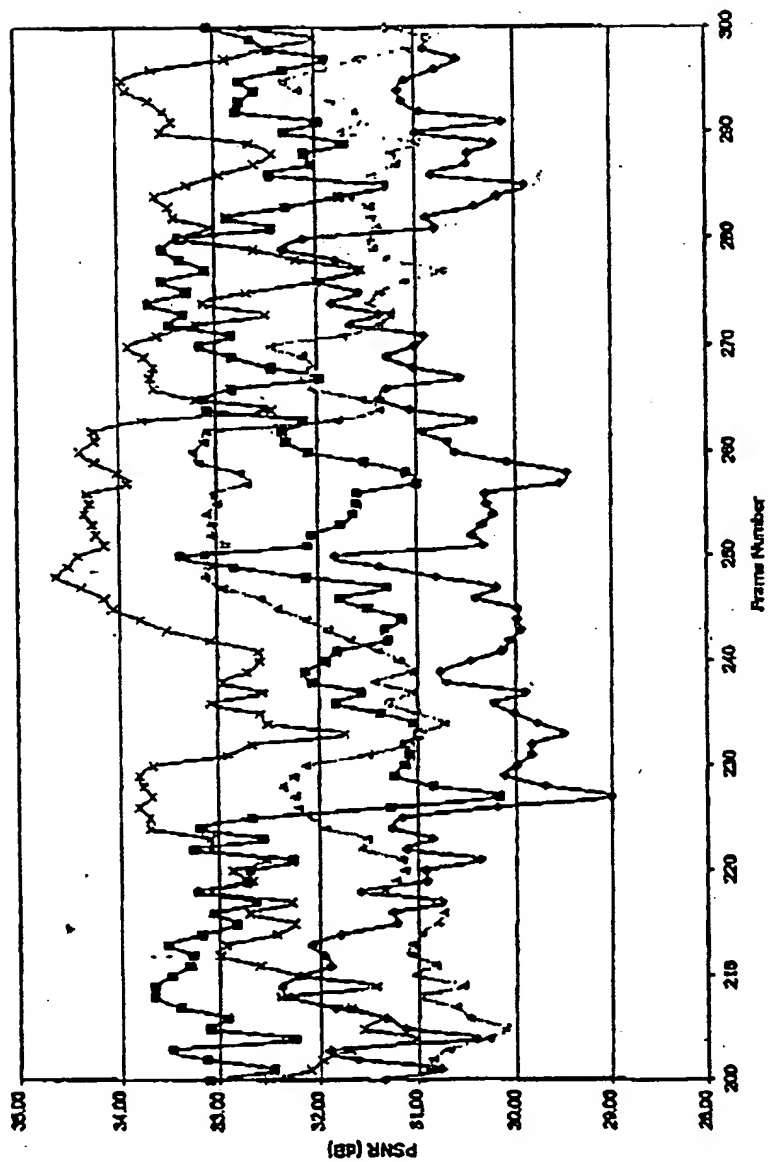
FIG. 11

**FIG. 12**

▲ extended algorithm – first sequence; ▲ basic method – first sequence;
◆ extended algorithm – second sequence; ◆ basic algorithm – second sequence.

**FIG. 13**

- × extended algorithm - first sequence; ▲ basic method - first sequence;
■ extended algorithm - second sequence; ♦ basic algorithm - second sequence.

**FIG. 14**

✕ extended algorithm - first sequence; ▲ basic method - first sequence;
■ extended algorithm - second sequence; ◆ basic algorithm - second sequence.

PATENT COOPERATION TREATY

From the
INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINING AUTHORITY

To:

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10 DEC 2001

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NOTIFICATION OF TRANSMITTAL OF
THE INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT
(PCT Rule 71.1)

Date of mailing
(day/month/year) 06.12.2001

Applicant's or agent's file reference
PDR/MB/X088469PWO

IMPORTANT NOTIFICATION

International application No.
PCT/GB00/03156

International filing date (day/month/year)
17/08/2000

Priority date (day/month/year)
21/08/1999

Applicant

THE UNIV. OF MANCHESTER INSTIT. OF.....et al.


1. The applicant is hereby notified that this International Preliminary Examining Authority transmits herewith the international preliminary examination report and its annexes, if any, established on the international application.
2. A copy of the report and its annexes, if any, is being transmitted to the International Bureau for communication to all the elected Offices.
3. Where required by any of the elected Offices, the International Bureau will prepare an English translation of the report (but not of any annexes) and will transmit such translation to those Offices.

4. REMINDER

The applicant must enter the national phase before each elected Office by performing certain acts (filing translations and paying national fees) within 30 months from the priority date (or later in some Offices) (Article 39(1)) (see also the reminder sent by the International Bureau with Form PCT/IB/301).

Where a translation of the international application must be furnished to an elected Office, that translation must contain a translation of any annexes to the international preliminary examination report. It is the applicant's responsibility to prepare and furnish such translation directly to each elected Office concerned.

For further details on the applicable time limits and requirements of the elected Offices, see Volume II of the PCT Applicant's Guide.

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INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION REPORT

(PCT Article 36 and Rule 70)

Applicant's or agent's file reference PDR/MB/X088469PWO		FOR FURTHER ACTION	See Notification of Transmittal of International Preliminary Examination Report (Form PCT/IPEA/416)
International application No. PCT/GB00/03156	International filing date (day/month/year) 17/08/2000	Priority date (day/month/year) 21/08/1999	
International Patent Classification (IPC) or national classification and IPC H04N7/26			
Applicant THE UNIV. OF MANCHESTER INSTTT. OF.....et al.			
<p>1. This international preliminary examination report has been prepared by this International Preliminary Examining Authority and is transmitted to the applicant according to Article 36.</p> <p>2. This REPORT consists of a total of 4 sheets, including this cover sheet.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> This report is also accompanied by ANNEXES, i.e. sheets of the description, claims and/or drawings which have been amended and are the basis for this report and/or sheets containing rectifications made before this Authority (see Rule 70.16 and Section 607 of the Administrative Instructions under the PCT).</p> <p>These annexes consist of a total of 6 sheets.</p>			
<p>3. This report contains Indications relating to the following items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Basis of the report II <input type="checkbox"/> Priority III <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability IV <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of unity of invention V <input type="checkbox"/> Reasoned statement under Article 35(2) with regard to novelty, inventive step or industrial applicability; citations and explanations supporting such statement VI <input type="checkbox"/> Certain documents cited VII <input type="checkbox"/> Certain defects in the international application VIII <input type="checkbox"/> Certain observations on the international application 			
Date of submission of the demand 19/03/2001		Date of completion of this report 08.12.2001	
Name and mailing address of the international preliminary examining authority:  European Patent Office D-80298 Munich Tel. +49 89 2399 - 0 Tx: 623656 epmu d Fax: +49 89 2399 - 4465		Authorized officer Schneiderlin, J Telephone No. +49 89 2399 7400 	

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT**

International application No. PCT/GB00/03156

I. Basis of the report

1. With regard to the elements of the international application (*Replacement sheets which have been furnished to the receiving Office in response to an invitation under Article 14 are referred to in this report as "originally filed" and are not annexed to this report since they do not contain amendments (Rules 70.16 and 70.17):*

Description, pages:

1-3,5-34	as originally filed			
4,4a	as received on	14/11/2001	with letter of	06/11/2001

Claims, No.:

1-25	as received on	14/11/2001	with letter of	06/11/2001
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Drawings, sheets:

1/12-12/12	as received on	13/10/2000
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2. With regard to the language, all the elements marked above were available or furnished to this Authority in the language in which the international application was filed, unless otherwise indicated under this item.

These elements were available or furnished to this Authority in the following language: , which is:

- ☐ the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of the international search (under Rule 23.1(b)).
- ☐ the language of publication of the international application (under Rule 48.3(b)).
- ☐ the language of a translation furnished for the purposes of international preliminary examination (under Rule 55.2 and/or 55.3).

3. With regard to any nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence disclosed in the international application, the international preliminary examination was carried out on the basis of the sequence listing:

- ☐ contained in the international application in written form.
- ☐ filed together with the international application in computer readable form.
- ☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in written form.
- ☐ furnished subsequently to this Authority in computer readable form.
- ☐ The statement that the subsequently furnished written sequence listing does not go beyond the disclosure in the international application as filed has been furnished.
- ☐ The statement that the information recorded in computer readable form is identical to the written sequence listing has been furnished.

4. The amendments have resulted in the cancellation of:

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT**

International application No. PCT/GB00/03156

- ☐ the description, pages:
☐ the claims, Nos.:
☐ the drawings, sheets:

5. ☐ This report has been established as if (some of) the amendments had not been made, since they have been considered to go beyond the disclosure as filed (Rule 70.2(c)):

(Any replacement sheet containing such amendments must be referred to under item 1 and annexed to this report.)

6. Additional observations, if necessary:

III. Non-establishment of opinion with regard to novelty, inventive step and industrial applicability

1. The questions whether the claimed invention appears to be novel, to involve an inventive step (to be non-obvious), or to be industrially applicable have not been examined in respect of:

- ☐ the entire international application.
☒ claims Nos. 1,25.

because:

- ☐ the said international application, or the said claims Nos. relate to the following subject matter which does not require an international preliminary examination (*specify*):
- ☒ the description, claims or drawings (*indicate particular elements below*) or said claims Nos. 1,25 are so unclear that no meaningful opinion could be formed (*specify*):
see separate sheet
- ☒ the claims, or said claims Nos. 1,25 are so inadequately supported by the description that no meaningful opinion could be formed.
- ☐ no international search report has been established for the said claims Nos. .

2. A meaningful international preliminary examination cannot be carried out due to the failure of the nucleotide and/or amino acid sequence listing to comply with the standard provided for in Annex C of the Administrative Instructions:

- ☐ the written form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.
☐ the computer readable form has not been furnished or does not comply with the standard.

**INTERNATIONAL PRELIMINARY
EXAMINATION REPORT - SEPARATE SHEET**

International application No. PCT/GB00/03156

Re Item III

No basis was found for "on adding the image to the reference image, setting the higher resolution data to zero" in the encoder (claim 1 and claim 25). This feature is even in contradiction with the description. Claims 1-25 are therefore not supported by the description as required by Article 6 PCT. Furthermore this amendment introduces subject-matter which extends beyond the content of the application as filed, contrary to Article 34(2)(b) PCT.

On the paragraph bridging pages 14 and 15 of the description, it is explained that the decoder will set to zero the higher resolution data that are not coded for a current image and which were coded in the reference image. This is needed to ensure the visual quality of the decoded picture in case of shortage of bandwidth because the reference image used by the decoder is not the same as the reference image used by the encoder as a skilled person would understand by reading the description page 8 to 14 (the decoder will have a lower resolution reference image).

No clear indication could be found in the description that the encoder includes a mechanism to set the higher resolution data of the reference image in the coding loop to zero.

The applicant tries to define a coding method with actions that are performed in a decoder.

Error concealment strategies used by video coding methods based upon the H.263 algorithm are spatial and therefore show up as corrupted regions in reconstructed image frames.

It is an object of the present invention to provide an image coding method which overcomes at least one of the above disadvantages.

According to the invention there is provided an image coding method comprising generating an ordered sequence of coded image data, the sequence beginning with coded data representative of an area of the image having high importance, and ending with coded data representative of an area of the image having lower importance, wherein the image is one of a sequence of images, the image is compared to a reference image determined using preceding images of the sequence and the coding method is used to code differences between the image and the reference image in a coding loop, wherein when an image is coded to a lower resolution than an immediately preceding image, on adding the image to the reference image, artefacts at high resolution in the reference image are removed by setting the higher resolution data to zero so that the resolution of the reference image corresponds to the resolution of the image that was coded, thereby allowing the amount of data which is used to represent the coded images to be increased or decreased, to adjust the amount of coded data to match an available bandwidth.

The invention also provides an image coding and decoding method comprising:

generating an ordered sequence of coded image data, the sequence beginning with coded data representative of an area of the image having high importance, and ending with coded data representative of an area of the image having lower importance, wherein the image is one of a sequence of images, the image is compared to a reference image determined using preceding images of the sequence and the coding method is used to code differences between the image and the reference image in a coding loop, wherein when an image is coded to a lower resolution than an immediately preceding image, on adding the image to the reference image, artefacts at high resolution in the reference image are removed by setting the higher resolution data to zero so that the resolution of the reference image corresponds to the resolution of the image that was coded, thereby allowing the amount of data which is used to represent the coded images to be increased or decreased to adjust the amount of coded data to match an available bandwidth; and

subsequently decoding the coded data by adding the coded data to a reference image in a coding loop, wherein when a coded image has been coded to a lower resolution than an immediately preceding image, on adding the coded image to the reference image during decoding, artefacts at high resolution in the reference image are removed by setting the higher resolution data to zero so that the resolution of the reference image corresponds to the resolution of the coded image.

Preferably, the importance of the image areas represented by the coded data decreases gradually over the ordered sequence.

Preferably, the image data coding sequence is arranged in a substantially spiral configuration centred on the area of importance.

Preferably, the area of importance is at a location selected as the most likely centre point of foveated vision of a viewer of the image.

Preferably, the area of importance is at a centre point of the image.

Preferably, the method includes converting an image into a multi-resolution representation, different resolution representations of the image being coded in sequence, the order of the sequence being determined to reflect psychophysical aspects of human vision.

Preferably, according to the sequence a luminance representation of the image is coded before chrominance representations of the image.

Preferably, for a given level of resolution, the luminance representation is arranged to include more resolution than the chrominance representations.

Claims

1. An image coding method comprising generating an ordered sequence of coded image data, the sequence beginning with coded data representative of an area of the image having high importance, and continuing with coded data representative of an area of the image having lower importance, wherein the image is one of a sequence of images, the image is compared to a reference image determined using preceding images of the sequence and the coding method is used to code differences between the image and the reference image in a coding loop, wherein when an image is coded to a lower resolution than an immediately preceding image, on adding the image to the reference image, artefacts at high resolution in the reference image are removed by setting the higher resolution data to zero so that the resolution of the reference image corresponds to the resolution of the image that was coded, thereby allowing the amount of data which is used to represent the coded images to be increased or decreased, to adjust the amount of coded data to match an available bandwidth.
2. An image coding method according to claim 1, wherein the importance of the image areas represented by the coded data decreases gradually over the ordered sequence.
3. An image coding method according to claim 2, wherein the image data coding sequence is arranged in a substantially spiral configuration centred on the area of importance.
4. An image coding method according to any preceding claim, wherein the area of importance is at a location selected as the most likely centre point of foveated vision of a viewer of the image.
5. An image coding method according to claim 4, wherein the area of importance is at a centre point of the image.
6. An image coding method according to any preceding claim, wherein the method includes converting an image into a multi-resolution representation, different resolution representations of the image being coded in sequence, the order of the sequence being determined to reflect psychophysical aspects of human vision.
7. An image coding method according to claim 6, wherein according to the sequence a luminance representation of the image is coded before chrominance representations of the image.

8. An image coding method according to claim 7, wherein for a given level of resolution, the luminance representation is arranged to include more resolution than the chrominance representations.

9. An image coding method according to any of claims 6 to 8, wherein the multi-resolution representation is generated using a wavelet transform, and the coding sequence comprises wavelet representation of the image which increase from a low level of resolution to a high level of resolution.

10. An image coding method according to claim 9, wherein wavelet orientations of horizontal and vertical image components are coded before wavelet orientations of diagonal image components.

11. An image coding method according to claim 10, wherein wavelet orientations of diagonal image components of a given level of resolution are coded after wavelet orientations of horizontal and vertical image components of a higher resolution.

12. An image coding method according to any preceding claim, wherein the method is implemented as part of a communications system, and the amount of coded information output by the method for a given image is determined on an image by image basis in accordance with the available bandwidth of the communications system.

13. An image coding method according to claim 12, wherein where necessary in order to fully utilise the available bandwidth of the communications system includes a truncated sequence of coded image data, image data representative of areas of least importance having been excluded from the truncated sequence.

14. An image coding method according to any preceding claim, wherein a predetermined code is added to a sequence to indicate the end of image data representative of a particular aspect of the image.

15. An image coding method according to any preceding claim, wherein scalar quantisation is used to reduce the amount of image data to be coded, the scalar quantisation being based upon a psychophysical model.

16. An image coding method according to any preceding claim, wherein the method includes an estimation of motion within an image as compared with a reference image, and the estimated motion is included in the coded image data.

17. An image coding method according to claim 15, wherein the method includes a choice between image data that has been coded using motion estimation and data that has been coded without using motion estimation, the choice being made upon the basis of minimising distortion of the coded image.

18. An image coding method according to any preceding claim, wherein the method includes vector quantisation of the image, the vector quantisation being implemented using a self organising neural map to provide image data in the form of indices of a codebook.

19. An image coding method according to claim 18 as dependent upon 9, wherein a threshold is applied to the magnitude of wavelet coefficients, and those which fall below the threshold are converted to zero coefficients.

20. An image coding method according to claim 18 as dependent upon 9, wherein different codebooks are used for different sub-bands of the wavelet representation of the image.

21. An image coding method according to any of claims 18 to 21, wherein the indices of the codebook are subsequently coded using variable length entropy coding.

22. An image coding method according to claim 21, wherein a series of zero indices followed by a non-zero index is coded as a pair of values by the variable length entropy coding, a first value representing the number of zero indices in the series and the second value representing the value of the non-zero index.

23. An image coding method according to claim 21 or claim 22, wherein a threshold is applied to the indices of the codebook, and those indices which fall below the threshold are converted to zero indices.

24. An image coding method according to claim 23, wherein wavelet coefficients which fall above the threshold are reduced by the value of the threshold.

25. An image coding and decoding method comprising:

AMENDED SHEET

generating an ordered sequence of coded image data, the sequence beginning with coded data representative of an area of the image having high importance, and ending with coded data representative of an area of the image having lower importance, wherein the image is one of a sequence of images, the image is compared to a reference image determined using preceding images of the sequence and the coding method is used to code differences between the image and the reference image in a coding loop, wherein when an image is coded to a lower resolution than an immediately preceding image, on adding the image to the reference image, artefacts at high resolution in the reference image are removed by setting the higher resolution data to zero so that the resolution of the reference image corresponds to the resolution of the image that was coded, thereby allowing the amount of data which is used to represent the coded images to be increased or decreased to adjust the amount of coded data to match an available bandwidth; and

subsequently decoding the coded data by adding the coded data to a reference image in a coding loop, wherein when a coded image has been coded to a lower resolution than an immediately preceding image, on adding the coded image to the reference image during decoding, artefacts at high resolution in the reference image are removed by setting the higher resolution data to zero so that the resolution of the reference image corresponds to the resolution of the coded image.

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